

THE ARGOSY.

OCTOBER 1, 1873.

THE MASTER OF GREYLANDS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ONE MORE INTERVIEW.

MR. AND MRS. BENT were in their sitting-room, facing the sea, as many guests around them as the room could conveniently accommodate. Much excitement prevailed: every tongue was going.

Upon the occasion of any unusual commotion at Greylands, the Dolphin, being the only inn in the place, was naturally made the centre point of the public, where expressions of marvel were freely given vent to and opinions exchanged.

Since the disappearance of Anthony Castlemaine, no event had occurred to excite the people like unto this—the shooting himself of young Walter Dance. To the primitive community this affair seemed nearly as unaccountable as that. The bare fact of the pistol's having gone off through the young man's inadvertently knocking his elbow against that bit of projecting wall, sticking itself out in the corner of the chapel ruins, was nothing extraordinary; it might have happened to anybody: but the wonder manifested lay in the attendant circumstances.

After the stir and bustle of seeing Walter Dance conveyed from the Grey Nunnery to his home had somewhat subsided, and the litter with its bearers, and the patient, and the doctor had fairly disappeared within doors, and they were barred out, the attendant spectators stayed a few minutes to digest the sight, and then moved off slowly by twos and threes to the Dolphin. The privileged among them went into Mr. and Mrs. Bent's room: the rest stayed outside. Marvel the first was, that young Dance should have gone out to shoot a bird at that uncanny hour.

of the morning; marvel the second was, that he should have chosen that haunted place, the chapel ruins, for nobody had evinced more fear in a silent way of the superstitions attending the Keep and the ghost that walked there than Walter Dance; marvel the third was, that he should have taken a pistol to shoot at the sea-bird, instead of a gun.

"Why couldn't he have got the bird at eight or nine o'clock at night?" debated Ben Little, quite an old oracle in the village, and the father of young Ben. "That's the best hour for them sea-birds: nobody in their senses would wait till a'most the dawn."

"And look here," cried out Mrs. Bent shrilly: but she was obliged to be shrill to get a general hearing. "Why did he have a pistol with him? Tom Dance keeps a gun: he takes it out in his boat sometimes; but he keeps no pistol."

"Young Walter said in the night to me and the doctor that it was his father's pistol, when we asked him about it," interposed John Bent.

"Rubbish!" returned the landlady. "I know better. Tom Dance never owned a pistol yet: how should he, and me not see it? There's not a man in the whole place that keeps a pistol."

"Except Mr. Superintendent Nettleby," put in old Ben.

"Nobody was bringing *him* in," retorted the landlady: "it's his business to keep a pistol. My husband, as you all know, thought it was a pistol he heard go off the night that young Mr. Castlemaine was missed, though the Commodore stood to it that it was his gun—and, as was said then, if it was a pistol where did the pistol come from? Pistols here, pistols there: I should like to know what we are all coming to! We shan't be able to step out of our doors after dark next, if pistols jump into fashion."

"At any rate, it seems it *was* a pistol last night, wherever he might have got it from," said Ben Little. "And downright careless it must have been of him to let it go off in the way he says it did—just for knocking his elbow again' the wall. It's hard to know whether that there's not a lame tale; invented to excuse his-self."

Several faces were turned on old Ben Little at this. His drift was scarcely understood.

"Excuse himself from what?" demanded Mrs. Bent sharply. "Do you suppose the young fellow would shoot himself purposely, Ben Little?"

"What I think," said Ben with calmness, "if one could come to the bottom of it, is this: that there young fellow got a fright last night—see the Grey Friar most probable; and his hand shook so that the pistol went off of itself."

This was so entirely new a view of probabilities, that the room sunk into temporary silence to revolve it. And not altogether an agreeable

one. The Grey Friar did enough mischief as it was, in the matter of terrifying timid spirits : if it came to causing dreadful personal injuries with pistols and what not, Greylands was at a pretty pass !

"Now I shouldn't wonder but that was it," cried John Bent, bringing down his hand on the table emphatically. "He saw the Grey Friar or thought he did : and it put him into more fright than mortal man could stand. You should just have seen him last night, and the terror he was in, when me and the doctor got to him—shaking the very board he lay upon."

"I'm sure he caused *us* fright enough," meekly interposed Sister Ann, who had been drawn into the inn (nothing loth) with the crowd. "When the Lady Superior, Sister Mary Ursula, came up to awake me and Sister Phœby, and we saw her trembling white face, and heard that Walter Dance had taken refuge at the Nunnery, all shot about, neither of us knew how we flung our things on, to get down to him."

"Walter Dance don't like going a-nigh the Friar's Keep any more nor the rest of us likes it ; and I can't think what should have took him there last night," spoke up young Mr. Pike from the general shop. "I was talking to him yesterday evening for a good half hour if I was talking a minute ; 'twas when I was shutting up : he said nothing then about going out to shoot a bird."

"But he must have went to shoot one," insisted Ben Little. "Why say he did it if he didn't ? What else took him to the ruins at all ?"

A fresh comer appeared upon the scene at this juncture in the person of Mr. Harry Castlemaine. In passing the inn, he saw signs of the commotion going on, inside and outside, and turned in to see and hear. The various doubts and surmises, agitating the assembly, were poured freely into his ear.

"Oh, it's all right—that's what young Dance went up for," said he, speaking lightly. "A day or two ago I chanced to hear him say he wanted to shoot a sea-bird for stuffing."

"Well, sir, that may be it ; no doubt it is, else why should he say it—as I've just asked," replied Ben Little. "But what we'd like to know is—why he should ha' stayed to the little hours of morning before he went out. Why not have went just after dark ?"

"He may have been busy," said Mr. Harry carelessly. "Or out in the boat."

"He wasn't out in the boat last night, sir, for I was talking to him as late as nine o'clock at our shop door," said young Pike. "The boat couldn't have went out after that and come back again."

"Well, I don't think it can concern us whether he went out after 'his bird a little later or a little earlier ; or in fact that it signifies at all which it was, to the matter in question," returned the Master of Greylands' son : and it might have been noticed that his tone bore a smattering of the haughty reserve that sometimes characterised his father's. "The

poor fellow has met with the accident ; and that's quite enough for him without being worried with queries as to the precise half hour it happened."

"What he says is this here, Mr. Harry : that a great big sea-bird came flying off the sea, flapping its wings above the ruins ; Dance cocked his pistol and raised it to take aim, when his elbow struck again' the corner wall there, and the charge went off."

"Just so, Ben ; that's what Tom Dance tells me," responded Mr. Harry to old Little, for he had been the speaker. "It will be a lesson to him, I daresay, not to go out shooting birds in the dark again."

"Not to shoot 'em *there*, at any rate," rejoined Ben. "The conclusion we've just been and drawn is this here, Mr. Harry, sir : that the Grey Friar's shade appeared to him and set him trembling, and the dratted pistol went off of itself."

Mr. Harry's face grew long at once. "Poor fellow ! it may have been so," he said : "and that alone would make his account confused. Well, my friends, the least we can do, as it seems to me, is to leave Walter Dance alone, and not bother him," he continued in conclusion : and out he went, as grave as a judge. Evidently the Grey Friar was not sneered at by Mr. Harry Castlemaine.

Sitting in a quiet corner of the room, obscured by the people and by the hubbub, was the Dolphin's guest, George North. Not a word spoken had escaped him. To every suggestive supposition, to every remark, reasonable and unreasonable, he had listened attentively. For this affair had made more impression on him than the facts might seem to warrant : and in his own mind he could not help connecting this shot and this mysterious pistol—that seemed to have come into Walter Dance's possession unaccountably—with the shot of that past February night, that had been so fatal to his brother.

Fatal, at least, in the conviction of many a one at Greylands. From John Bent to Mr. George North's sister-in-law, Charlotte Guise, and with sundry intermediate persons, the impression existed and could not be shaken off. Mr. North had never given in to the belief : he had put faith in Mr. Castlemaine ; he had persistently hoped that Anthony might not be dead ; that he would reappear some time and clear up the mystery : but an idea had now taken sudden hold of him that this second edition of a shot, or rather the cause of it, would be found to hold some connection with the other shot : and that the two might proceed from the Grey Friar. Not the ghost of a Grey Friar, but a living and substantial one, who might wish to keep his precincts uninvaded. We, who are in the secret of this later shot, can see how unfounded the idea was : but Mr. North was not in the secret, and it had taken (he knew not why) firm hold of him.

First of all, he had no more faith in the lame account of Mr. Walter Dance than the doctor had. It may be remembered that when the

landlord was telling him of the accident the previous night, Mr. North remarked that he had been with Dance for a sail only that same morning. During this sail, which had lasted about two hours, the conversation had turned on the Friar's Keep—Mr. North frequently, in an apparently indirect manner, did turn his converse on it—and Walter Dance had expressed the most unequivocal faith in the Grey Monk that haunted it, and protested, with a shake of superstitious terror, that he would not go "a-nigh them parts" after dark for all the world. Therefore Mr. North did not take in the report that he had voluntarily gone to the Chapel ruins to shoot a bird in the dead of the night.

The talkers around Mr. North all agreed, receiving their version of the affair from Sister Ann and John Bent, that Walter Dance's account was imperfect, confused, and not clearly to be understood; and that he was three parts beside himself with nervous fear when he gave it. All food for Mr. George North: but he listened on, saying nothing.

When Harry Castlemaine quitted the Dolphin, he turned in the direction of Stilborough; he was going to walk thither—which was nothing for his long legs. In ascending the hill past the church, which was a narrow and exceedingly lonely part of the road, the yew-trees overshadowing the gloomy churchyard on one side, the dark towering cliff on the other, he encountered Jane Hallet. She had been to Stilborough on some errand connected with her knitting-work, and was now coming back again. They met just abreast of the churchyard gate, and simultaneously stopped; as if to stop was with both of them a matter of course.

"Where have you been, Jane?" asked Mr. Harry.

"To Stilborough," she answered.

"You must have gone early."

"Yes, I went for wool"—indicating a brown-paper parcel in her hand.

"For wool!" he repeated, in a somewhat annoyed tone. "I have told you not to worry yourself with more of that needless work, Jane."

"And make my aunt more displeased than she is with me!" returned Jane sadly. "I must keep on with it as long as I can, while in her sight."

"Well, I think you must have enough to do without that," he answered, dropping the point. "How pale you are, Jane!"

"I am tired. It is a long walk, there and back, without rest. I sat down on one of the shop stools while they weighed the wool, but it was not much rest."

"There again! I have told you the walk is too far. Why don't you attend to me, Jane?"

"I wish I could: but it is so difficult. You know what my aunt is."

"I am not sure, Jane, but it will be better to—to—" he stopped, seemingly intent on treading a stone into the path—"to make the

change now," he went on, "and get the bother over. It must come, you know."

"Not yet; no need to do it yet," she quickly answered. "Let it be put off as long as it can be. I dread it frightfully."

"Yes, that's it: you are tormenting yourself into fiddlestrings. Don't be foolish, Jane. It is I who shall have to bear the storm, not you; and my back's broad enough, I hope."

She sighed deeply: her pale, thoughtful, pretty face cast up in sad apprehension towards the blue autumn sky. A change came over its expression: some remembrance seemed suddenly to occur to her.

"Have you heard any news about Walter Dance?" she asked with animation. "As I came down the cliff this morning, Mrs. Bent was leaving the baker's with some hot rolls in her apron, and she crossed over to tell me that Walter had shot himself accidentally at the Chapel ruins in the middle of the night. Is it true?"

"Shot himself instead of a sea-bird," slightly responded Mr. Harry.

"And in the Chapel ruins?"

"I hear he says so."

"But—that is not likely to be the truth, is it?"

"How should I know, Jane?"

She lodged the paper parcel on the top of the gate, holding it with one hand, and looked wistfully across the graveyard. Harry Castlemaine whistled to a sparrow that was chirping on a branch of the nearest yew tree.

"Was it Mr. Nettleby who did it?" she inquired, in a low, hesitating whisper.

"Mr. Nettleby!" repeated Harry Castlemaine in astonishment, breaking off his whistle to the bird. "What in the world makes you ask that, Jane?"

A faint colour passed over her thin face, and she paused before answering.

"Mrs. Bent said she thought nobody in the place possessed a pistol except Superintendent Nettleby."

He looked keenly at Jane: at her evident uneasiness. She was growing pale again; paler than before; with what looked like an unnatural pallor. Mr. Harry Castlemaine's brow knitted itself into lines, with the effort to make Jane out.

"I don't like the Chapel ruins: or the Friar's Keep," she went on, in the same low tone. "I wish nobody ever went near them. I wish *you* would not go!"

"Wish I would not go!" he exclaimed. "What do you mean, Jane?"

"It may be your turn next to be shot," she said with rising emotion, so much so that the words came out jerkily.

"I cannot tell what it is that you are driving at," he answered, regarding searchingly the evidently tired frame, the unmistakable agitation and anxiety of the thin white face. "What have I to do with the Chapel ruins? I don't go roaming about at night with a pistol to shoot sea-birds."

"If you would but make a confidant of me!" she sighed.

"What have I to confide? If you will tell me what it is, perhaps I may. I don't know."

She glanced up at him, flushing again slightly. His countenance was unembarrassed, open, and kind in its expression; but the decisive lips were set firmly. Whether he knew what she meant, or whether he did not, it was evident that he would not meet her in the slightest degree.

"Please do not be angry with me," faltered Jane.

"When am I angry with you? Simply, though, I do not understand you this morning, Jane. I think you must have tired yourself too much."

"I am tired," she replied; "and I shall be glad to get home to rest. My aunt, too, will be thinking it is time I was back."

She moved her parcel of wool off the gate; and, after another word or two, they parted; Jane going down hill, Harry Castlemaine up. Before he was quite beyond view, he stood to look back at her, and saw she had turned to look after him. A bright smile illumined his handsome face, and he waved his hand to her gaily. Few, very few were there, so attractive as Harry Castlemaine.

Jane's lips parted with a farewell word, though he could not hear it, and her pretty dimples were all smiles as she went onwards. At the foot of the cliff she came upon little Bessy Gleeson in trouble. The child had fallen, goodness knew from what height, had cut both her knees, and was sobbing finely. Jane took the little thing up tenderly, kissed and soothed her, and then carried her up the cliff to the Gleesons' cottage. What with Bessy and what with the parcel, she could not breathe when she got there. Down she dropped on the stone by the door, her face whiter than ever.

"Where's mother?" she asked, as some of the little ones, Polly included, came running out.

But Nancy Gleeson had seen the ascent from the side window, and came forward, her hands all soap-suds. She was struck with Jane's exhausted look.

"Bessy has fallen down, Mrs. Gleeson. Her knees are bleeding."

"And how could you think o' lugging her all up the cliff, Miss Jane! I declare you be as white as a sheet. A fat, heavy child like her! Fell down on your knees, have you, you tiresome little grub. There's one or another on you always a doing of it."

"It is a warm morning and I have been making haste home from

Stilborough," remarked Jane, as she rose to go on, and not choosing to be told she looked white without accounting for it. "Wash her knees with some hot water please, Mrs. Gleeson : I daresay she is in pain, poor little thing."

"Lawk a me, Miss Jane," the woman called after her, "if you had half-a-dozen of 'em about you always, you'd know better nor to take notice o' such trifles as knees." But Jane was already nearly out of hearing.

Harry was not the only one of the Castlemaine family who went that day to Stilborough. In the full brightness of the afternoon, the close carriage of the Master of Greylands, attended by its liveried servants, might have been seen bowling on its way thither, and one lady, attired in the dress of the Grey Sisters, seated inside it. A lady who was grand, and noble and beautiful, in spite of the simple attire—Mary Ursula.

She was about to pay a visit to that friend of hers on whom misfortune had fallen—Mrs. Ord. The double calamity—loss of husband and loss of fortune—reaching Mrs. Ord by the same mail, had thrown her upon a sick bed ; and she was at all times delicate. The letter that Mary had sat up to write was despatched by a messenger early in the morning : and she had craved the loan of her uncle's close carriage to convey her on a personal visit. The *close* carriage : Mary shrunk (perhaps from the novelty of it) from showing herself this first time in her changed dress among her native townspeople.

The carriage left her at Mrs. Ord's house and was directed to return for her in an hour ; and Mary was shown up to the sick chamber. It was a sad interview : this poor Mrs. Ord—whose woes, however, need not be entered upon here in detail, as she has nothing to do with the story—was but a year or two older than Mary Ursula. They had been girls together. She was very ill now : and Mary felt that at this early stage little or no consolation could be offered. She herself had had her sorrows since they last met, and it was a trying hour to both of them. Before the hour had expired, Mary took her leave and went down to the drawing-room to wait for the carriage.

She had closed the door, and was half way across the richly-carpeted floor before she became aware that any one was in the room. It was a gentleman—who rose from the depths of a lounging chair at her approach. Every drop of blood in Mary's veins seemed to stand still, and then rush wildly on : her sight momentarily failed her, her senses were confused : and but that she had shut the door behind her, and come so far, she might have retreated again. For it was William Blake Gordon.

They stood facing each other for an instant in silence, both painfully agitated. Mary's grey bonnet was in her hand ; she had taken it off in the sick chamber : he held an open letter, that he had been appa-

rently reading to pass away the time, while the servants should carry his message to their sick mistress and bring back an answer. Mary saw the writing of the letter and recognised it for Agatha Mountsorrel's. In his confusion, as he hastily attempted to refold the letter, it escaped his hand, and fluttered to the ground. The other hand he was holding out to her.

She met it, scarcely perhaps conscious of what she did. He felt the trembling of the fingers; he saw the agitation of the wan white face. Not a word did either of them speak. Mary sat down on a sofa, he took a chair near after picking up his letter.

"What a terrible calamity this is that has fallen on Mrs. Ord!" he exclaimed, seizing upon it as something to say.

"Two calamities," answered Mary.

"Yes indeed. Her husband dead, and her fortune gone! My father sent me here to inquire personally after her; to see her if possible. He and Colonel Ord were good friends."

"I do not think she can see you. She said that I was the one only friend who would have been admitted to her."

"I did not expect she would: but Sir Richard made me come. You know his way."

Mary slightly nodded assent. She raised her hand and gently pushed from her temple the braid of her thick brown hair: as though, conscious of the whiteness of her face, she would fain cover it until the colour returned. Mr. Blake Gordon, a very bad hand at deception at all times, suffered his feelings to get the better of conventionality now, and burst forth into truth.

"Oh, Mary! how like this is to the old days! To have you by me alone!—to be sitting once more together."

"Like unto them?" she returned sadly. "No. That can never be."

"Would to heaven it could!" he aspirated.

"A strange wish, that, to hear from you now."

"And, perhaps you think, one I should not have spoken. It is always in my heart, Mary."

"Then it ought not to be."

"I see," he said. "You have been hearing tales about me."

"I have heard one tale. I presume it to be a true one. And I—I—" her lips were trembling grievously—"I wish you both happiness with all my heart."

Mr. Blake Gordon pushed his chair back and began to pace the room restlessly. At that moment a servant came in with a message to him from her mistress. He merely nodded a reply, and the girl went away again.

"Do you know what it has all been for me, Mary?" he asked, halting before her, his brow flushed, his lips just as much agitated as hers.

"Do you guess what it is? Every ray of sunshine went out of my life with you."

"At the time you—you may have thought that. But why recall it? The sun has surely begun to shine for you again."

"Never in this world. Never will it shine as it did then."

"Nay, but that, in the face of facts, is scarcely credible," she rejoined, striving to get up as much calmness, and to speak as quietly, as though Mr. Blake Gordon had never been more to her than an acquaintance or friend; nerving herself to answer him now as such. "You are, I believe, about to—" a cough took her just there, and she suddenly put her hand to her throat—"marry Agatha."

"It is true. At least, partially true."

"Partially?"

"For Heaven's sake, Mary, don't speak to me in that coldly indifferent tone!" he passionately broke in. "I cannot bear it from you."

"How would you have me speak?" she asked, rapidly regaining her self-possession; and her tone was certainly kind, rather than cold, though her words were redolent of calm reasoning. "The past is past, you know, and circumstances have entirely changed: it will be better to meet them as such, to regard them as they are."

"Yes, they are changed," he answered bitterly. "You have made yourself into a lay-nun——"

"Nay, not that," she interrupted with a smile.

"A Sister of Charity, then"—pointing to her grey dress. "And I, as the world says, am to espouse Agatha Mountsorrel."

"But surely that is true."

"It is true in so far as that I have asked her to be my wife. That I should live to say that to you of another woman, Mary! She has accepted me. But, as to the marriage, I hope it will not take place yet awhile. I do not press for it."

"You shall both have my best and truest prayers for your happiness," rejoined Mary, her voice again slightly trembling. "Agatha will make you a good wife. The world calls her haughty; but she will not be haughty to her husband."

"How coolly you can contemplate it!" he cried, in reproach and pain.

Just for one single moment, in her heart's lively anguish, the temptation assailed her to tell him what it really was to her, and how deeply she loved him still. She threw it behind her, a faint smile parting her lips.

"William, you know well that what I say is all I can say. I am wedded to the life I have chosen; you will soon be wedded actually to another than me. Nothing remains for us in common: save the satisfaction of experiencing good wishes for the welfare of the other."

"It is not love, or any feeling akin to it, that has caused me to address Agatha Mountsorrel——" he was beginning; but she interrupted him with decision.

"I would rather not hear this. It is not right of you to say it."

"I will say it. Mary, be still. It is but a word or two; and I will have my way in this. It is in obedience to my father that I have addressed Miss Mountsorrel. Since the moment when you and I parted, he has never ceased to urge her upon me, to throw us together in every possible way. I resisted for a long while; but my nature is weakly yielding—as you have cause to know—and at length I was badgered into it. Forgive the word, Mary. Badgered by Sir Richard, until I went to her and said Will you be my wife? The world had set the rumour running long before that; but the world was in haste. And now that I have told you so much, I am thankful. I meant to make the opportunity of telling you had one not offered: for the worst pain of all would be, that you should fancy I could love another. The hearing that I have engaged myself in this indecent haste—*your* hearing it—is enough shame for me."

The handsome chariot of the Master of Greylands, its fine horses prancing and curvetting, passed the window and drew up at the house. Mary rose.

"I hope with all my heart that you will love her as you once loved me," she said to him in a half whisper, as she rang the bell and caught up her bonnet. "To know that, William, will make my own life somewhat less lonely."

"Did you *ever* care for me?" broke from him.

"Yes. But the past is past."

He stood in silence while she tied on her grey bonnet, watching her slender fingers as they trembled with the silk strings. A servant appeared in answer to the ring. Mary was drawing on her gloves.

"The door," said Mr. Blake Gordon.

"Good-bye," she said to him, holding out her hand.

He wrung it almost to pain. "You will allow me to see you to your carriage?"

She took the arm he held out to her and they went through the hall and down the steps together. The footman had the carriage door open, and he, her ex-lover, placed her in. The man sprung up to his place behind, and the chariot rolled away. For a full minute after its departure, William Blake Gordon was still standing looking after it, forgetting to put his hat on: forgetting, as it seemed, all created things.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

COMBINED with Mr. Walter Dance's remorse for having betrayed to Miss Castlemaine what he did betray in that paroxysm of fear when he thought the world was closing for him, was a wholesome dread of the consequences to himself. What his father's anger would be and what Mr. Castlemaine's punishment of him might be, when they should learn all his foolish tongue had said, Walter did not care to contemplate. As he lay that night in the Grey Nunnery after the surgeon's visit, Sister Ann watching by his pallet, he went through nearly as much agony of fear from this source as he had just gone through from the other. While he believed his life was in peril, that that mysterious part of him, the Soul, was about to be summoned to render up its account, earth and earth's interests were as nothing: utterly lost, indeed, beside that momentous hour which he thought was at hand. But, after reassurance had set in, and the doctor had quietly convinced him there was no danger, that he would shortly be well again, then the worldly fear rose to the surface. Sister Ann assumed that his starts and turns in the bed arose from bodily pain or restlessness: in point of fact it was his mind that was tormenting him and would not let him be still.

Of course it was no fault of his that Miss Castlemaine had found him in the cloistered vaults,—or that he had found her, whichever it might be called—or that there was a door that he never knew of opening into them, or a passage between them and the Grey Nunnery, or that the pistol had gone off and shot him. For all this he could not be blamed. But what he could, and would, be blamed for, was, that he had committed the astounding folly of betraying the secret relating to the Friar's Keep; for it might, so to say, destroy all connected with it. Hence his resolve to undo, so far as he could, the mischief with Miss Castlemaine by denying to her that his disclosure had reason or foundation in it: and asserting that it must have been the effect of his disordered brain.

Believing that he had done this, when his morning interview with Sister Mary Ursula was over; believing that he had convinced her his words had been but the result of his sick fancies, he began next to ask himself why he need tell the truth at all, even to his father. The only thing to be accounted for was the shot to himself and his turning up at the Grey Nunnery: but he might just as well stand to the tale he had told the doctor, to his father as well as to the world; namely, that he had met with the injury in the chapel ruins, and had crawled to the Grey Nunnery for succour.

This happy thought he carried out: and Tom Dance was no wiser than other people. When once deception is entered upon, the course

is comparatively easy ; " *ce n'est que le premier pas qui coute*," say the French : and Mr. Walter Dance, truthful and honest though he loved to be, found himself quite an adept at farce-relating before the first day was over.

Not that Tom Dance, wise in his nearly fifty years, took it all in unquestioningly. There was something about the story and about Wally's voice and face and shifting eyes when he told it, that rather puzzled him ; in short, that created somewhat of a doubt : but the very impossibility (as he looked upon it) of the injuries having occurred in any other way served to dispel suspicion. The idea that there was a secret passage from the Friar's Keep to the Grey Nunnery could no more have entered into Tom Dance's imagination, than that there was a passage to the moon.

When the indoor hubbub and bustle of the removal of Walter home from the Grey Nunnery was over, and the numerous friends, admitted one at a time to see him, had gone again, and Walter had had some refreshing sleep towards sunset, then Tom Dance thought the time and opportunity had come to have a talk with him. The old grandmother, Dame Dance—who lived in her solitary abode under the cliff at some distance, and whose house at high water was not accessible, except by boat—had come up to nurse and tend him, bringing her white apron and a nightcap. But Tom Dance sent his mother home again. He was a good son, and he told her that she should not have the trouble : he and Sarah could attend to Wally without further help. Sarah was his daughter, Walter's sister, and several years older than the young man. She was a cripple, poor thing, but very useful in the house ; a shy, silent young woman, who could only walk with crutches ; so that Greylands scarcely saw her out of doors from year's end to year's end. Now and then on some fine Sunday she would contrive to get to church, but that was all.

Tom Dance's house was the last in the village next the beach, its side windows facing the sea. It was twilight, but there was no candle in Walter's room yet, and as Tom Dance sat down at the window, he saw the stars coming out, over the grey waters, one by one, and heard the murmuring of the waves.

"D'ye feel that ye could peck a bit, Wally ?" asked he, turning his head sideways towards the bed.

"Sarah's gone to make me some arrowroot, father."

"That's poor stuff, lad."

"It's what Dr. Parker said I was to have."

"Look here, Wally," continued Tom after a pause, during which he had seemed to be looking out to sea again, "I can't make out what should have taken you up on to the Chapel ruins. Why didn't you follow us to the Hutt ?"

To account feebly for this one particular item in the tale, was

Walter's chief difficulty. He knew that: and while his father was entering upon it in the morning, had felt truly thankful that they were interrupted.

"I don't know *what* took me," replied Walter, with a sort of semi-wonder in his own voice, as though the fact were just as much of a puzzle to himself as it could be to his father. "I stayed behind to lock up: and the rest of you had all gone on to the Hutt ever so long: and—and so I went up and out by the Chapel ruins."

"One would think you must ha' been in a dream, lad."

"It's rare and lonely up that other long passage by oneself," hazarded Walter. "You are up at the Chapel ruins and out that way in no time."

"Rare and lonely!" sharply repeated the elder man, as though the words offended him. "Are you turning coward, lad?"

"Not I, father," warmly rejoined Walter, perceiving that plea would not find favour. "Any way, I don't know what it was took me to go up to the Chapel ruins. I went; and that seems to be all about it."

"It was an unpardonable hazardous thing to do. Suppose you had been seen coming out o' the Keep at that time? And with a pistol!"

"I wish the pistol had been at the bottom o' the sea, I do!" groaned the invalid.

"What did you take the pistol up for?—why didn't you leave it in the usual place with the other pistols? Tell ye what, lad: but that I know you b'ain't given to drink, I should say you'd got a drop of the crew's old Hollands into you."

"Janson did offer me some," said Walter from under the bed-clothes.

"And you took it! Well, you must ha' been a fool. Why, your grandmother ud be fit to ——"

"I wasn't drunk; don't think that, father," interrupted Walter, after a rapid mental controversy as to whether, of the two evils, it might not be better to confess to the Hollands—though, in point of fact, he had not touched a drop. "See here: it's no good talking about it, now it's done and over."

"And—if you did get out by way of the Chapel ruins, what on earth made you go letting off the pistol there?"

"Well, it was an accident, that was: I didn't go to let it off. That there wall in the corner knocked again my elbow."

"What took you to the corner?"

"I thought I'd just give a look after the boats, that were getting off," said Walter, who had spent that day as well as the night, rehearsing difficult items in his mind. "The beastly pistol went off somehow, and down I dropped."

"And of all things," continued the fisherman, "to think you should ha' knocked up the Grey Sisters! It must have been Hollands."

"I was bleeding to death, father. The Grey Nunnery is the nearest place."

"No, it's not. Nettleby's is the nearest."

"As if I should go *there*!" cried Walter, opening his eyes at the bare suggestion.

"And as near as any is the Hutt. That's where you ought to have come on to. *Why* did you not? Come!"

"I—I—never thought of the Hutt," said poor Walter, wondering when this ordeal would be over.

"You hadn't got your head upon you: that's what it was. Waily lad, I'd a'most rather see you drowned in the sea some rough day afore my eyes, nor see you take to drink."

"'Twasn't drink, 'twas the sight of the blood," deprecatingly returned Walter. "The Grey Ladies were rare and good to me, father."

"That don't excuse your having went there. In two or three minutes more you'd have reached your home here—and we might ha' kept it all quiet. As it is, every tongue in the place is a wagging over it."

"Let 'em wag," suggested Walter. "They can't know nothing."

"How do you know what they'll find out, with their prying and their marvelling?" demanded the angry man. "Let 'em wag, indeed!"

"I could hardly get to the Nunnery," pleaded Walter. "I thought I was dying."

"There'll be a rare fuss about it with the Castlemaines! I know that. Every knock that has come to the door this blessed day I've took to be the Master o' Greylands, and shook in my shoes. A fine market you'll bring *your* pigs to, if you be to go on like this, a getting yourself and everybody else into trouble! George Hallet, poor fellow, would never have been such a fool."

Reproached on all sides, self-convicted of worse folly than his father had a notion of, weak in body, fainting in spirit, and at his very wits' end to ward off the home questions, Walter ended by bursting into a flood of tears. That disarmed Tom Dance; and he let the matter drop. Sarah limped in with the arrowroot, and close upon that Mr. Parker arrived.

The bright moon, wanting yet some days to its full, shone down on the Chapel ruins. Seated against the high, blank wall of the Grey Nunnery, his sketch-book before him, his pencil in hand, was Mr. North. He had come there to take the Friar's Keep by moonlight: at least, the side portion of it that looked that way. The Chapel ruins with its broken walls made the foreground: the half-ruined Keep, with its gothic door of entrance, the back; to the right, the sketch took in a bit of the sea. No doubt it would make an attractive

picture when done in water-colours, and one that must bear its own painful interest for George North.

He worked attentively and rapidly, his thoughts meanwhile as busy as his hands. The moon gave him almost as much light as he would have had by day: though it cast dark shades as well as brightness; and that would make the chief beauty of the completed painting.

Somewhere about a week had passed since the accident to Walter Dance, and the young man was three parts well again. The occurrence had rarely been out of Mr. North's mind since. He had taken the opportunity in an easy and natural manner of calling in at Dance's to pay a visit to the invalid, to enquire after his progress and condole with him; and he had been struck during that interview with the same idea that had come to him before—namely, that the story told was not real. Putting a searching question or two, his eyes intently fixed upon the wounded man's countenance, he was surprised—or, perhaps not surprised—to see the face flush, the eyes turn away, the answering words become hesitating. Nothing, however, came of it, save this impression. Walter parried every question, telling the same tale that he had told others: but the eyes of the speaker, I say, could not look Mr. North in the face, the ring of the voice was not true. Mr. North asked this and that; but he could not ask too pointedly or persistently, his apparent motive being concern for the accident, slightly tempered with curiosity.

"It was not the ghost of the Grey Friar that shot you, was it?" he questioned at last with a joking smile. Walter evidently took it in earnest, and shook his head gravely.

"I never saw the ghost at all, sir, that night: nor thought of it, either. I was only thinking of the bird."

"You did not get the bird, after all."

"No; he flew away when the pistol went off. It startled him, I know: you should have heard his wings a flapping. Father says he'll shoot one the first opportunity he gets."

How much was false and how much true, Mr. North could not discern. So far as the bird went, he was inclined to believe in it—Walter must have had some motive for going to the ruins, and, he fancied, a very strong one. It was the shot itself and the hour of its occurrence that puzzled him. But Mr. North came away from the interview no wiser than he had entered on it: except that his doubts were strengthened.

As if to give colouring to, and confirm the story, Tom Dance, being in the company of some other fishermen at the time, and having his gun with him, aimed at a large grey sea-gull that came screeching over their heads, as they stood on the beach, and brought him down. The next day, in the face and eyes of all Greylands, he went marching

off with the dead bird to Stilborough, and left it with a naturalist to be stuffed : and pedestrians, passing the naturalist's shop, were regaled with the sight of the great bird exhibited there, its wings stretched out to the uttermost. But it turned out upon inquiry—for people, swayed only by curiosity, made very close inquiries, and seemed never to tire of doing it—that the bird had not been *ordered* by the gentleman at Stilborough, as Walter Dance was at first understood to say. Dance and his son had intended to make a present of one to him. As they would now do.

All these matters, with the various speculations they brought in their train, were swaying Mr. North's mind, as he worked on this evening by moonlight. The occurrence had certainly spurred up his intention to discover Anthony's fate, rendering him more earnest in the pursuit. It could not be said that he was not earnest in it before ; but there was nothing he could lay hold of, nothing tangible. In point of fact, there was not anything now.

"Do you belong to me?" he apostrophised, casting his eyes towards the distant chimneys of Greylands' Rest, his thoughts having turned on the Master of Greylands. "Failing poor Anthony to inherit, is the property mine? I would give much to know. My Uncle James seems too honourable a man to keep what is not his own : and yet—why did he not show to Anthony the tenure by which he holds the estate?—why does he not show it now?—for he must know how people talk, and the doubts that are cast on him. I cannot tell what to think. Personally I like him very much ; and he is so like ——"

A sudden shade fell on Mr. North's book, and made him look up abruptly. It was caused by a cloud passing over the face of the moon. A succession of light clouds, this cloud the vanguard of them, was sailing quickly up from beyond the sea, obscuring, until they should have dispersed, the silvery brightness of the Queen of night. Mr. North's sketch was, however, nearly done : and a few quick strokes completed it.

Putting it into his portfolio, he rose, took a look out over the sea, and passed into the Friar's Keep. Many a time, by night or by day, since his first arrival at Greylands, had he gone stealthily into that place ; but never had found aught to reward him by sight or sound. Thrice he had explored it with a light : but he had seen only the monotonous space of pillared cloisters that all the world might explore at will. Silent and deserted as ever, were they now : and George North was on the point of turning out again, when the sound of light footsteps smote on his ear, and he drew back between the wall and the first pillar near the entrance.

He had left the door wide open—which was perhaps an incautious thing to do—and some rays of moonlight came streaming in. *He* was in the dark : all the darker, perhaps, the nook where he stood, from the

contrast presented by these shining rays of light. George North held his breath while he looked and listened.

Darkening the shining moonlight at the entrance, came a woman's figure, entering far more stealthily and softly than Mr. North had entered. She stole along amid the pillars, and then stopped suddenly, as though intent on listening. She was not quite beyond the vision of Mr. North; his eyes were accustomed to the darkness, and the rays at the open door threw a semi-light beyond: and he saw her push back her hood and bend her ear to listen. Quite two minutes passed thus: they seemed like five to George North, she standing still and motionless as the grave. Then she turned, retraced her steps, and went out again. Mr. North stole to the door in her wake, and looked after her.

Yes, he thought so! It was Jane Hallet. She had gone to the edge now, and was gazing straight out to seaward, her hands raised over her eyes to steady their sight. Mr. North knew her only by the outline of her figure, for the hood of her cloak was well on; but he could not be mistaken. Being about himself in an evening, he had seen her about; had seen her more than once come to these ruins and stand as she was standing now: once only before had she entered the Keep. The precise purport of these manœuvres he could not fathom, but felt sure that she was tracking, and yet hiding herself from, Harry Castlemaine. Another minute and then she turned.

"Not to-night," Mr. North heard her say aloud to herself as she passed the door of the Keep. And she went through the gate and walked rapidly away towards Greylands.

Mr. North took out his watch to see the time, holding it to the moonlight. Half-past nine. Not too late, he decided, to go to Greylands' Rest and pay a short visit to Madame Guise. The family were out that evening, dining at Stilborough—which information he had picked up from Mrs. Bent: had they been at home, he would not have thought of presenting himself so late. It might be a good opportunity to get a few minutes alone with his sister-in-law, and he wanted to tell her that he had heard from Gap.

Crossing the road, he went striding quickly up the lane, and was nearly run over by Commodore Teague's spring-cart, which came with a bolt unexpectedly out of the turning. The Commodore, who was driving, did not see him: he had his head bent down nearly to the off shaft, doing something to the harness. The cart clattered on its way, and Mr. North pursued his.

Turning in at the gate of Greylands' Rest, and passing round the broad path, he heard a voice singing; a voice that he knew and loved too well. Ethel was not gone to the dinner, then! She sat alone at the piano in the red parlour, its glass doors being thrown wide open, singing a love ditty to herself in the moonlight. Mr. North, every

pulse of his heart beating with its sense of bliss, drew himself up against the wall beside the window to listen.

It was a very absurdly-foolish song as to words, just as three parts of the songs mostly are; and its theme was love, and that was enough for Ethel and for him; to both the words were no doubt nothing short of sublime. A kind of refrain followed every verse: the reader shall at least have the benefit of that.

“And if my love prove faithless
What will be left for me?—
I'll let him think me scatheless,
And lay me down and die.”

There were five or six verses in the ballad, and these lines came in after every verse. Ethel had a sweet voice and sang well. Mr. George North stood against the wall outside, his ears and his heart alike taking in the song, the words being as distinct as though they were spoken. The final refrain had two more lines added to it:

“But I know that he is not faithless:
He'll be true to me for aye.”

Ethel left the piano with the last word and came to the window, her bright face, raised to look at the moon, glowing with a sweet, hopeful expression that seemed to tell of love.

“But I know that he is not faithless:
He'll be true to me for aye.”

These words were repeated over to herself as she stood ^{and} sung but spoken; repeated as though she were making the romance her own; as though the words were a fact, an assurance to herself that somebody would be true to her. George North went forward and Ethel was startled.

“Oh, Mr. North!” she exclaimed. “How you frightened me!”

He took her hand—both hands—in his contrition, begging pardon for his thoughtlessness, and explaining that he waited there until she finished her song, not to enter and disturb it. It was one of the sweetest moments in the life of either, this unexpected meeting, all around so redolent of poetry and romance. Mr. North had to release her hands, but their hearts were thrilling with the contact.

“I thought you were gone out to dinner,” he said.

“No, I was not invited. Only papa and mamma and Harry.”

“Or of course I should not have attempted to intrude so late as this. I thought, believing Madame Guise alone, it would be a good opportunity to see her. I suppose she is at home.”

“Oh yes; she will be glad to see you,” replied Ethel, her heart beating so wildly with its love and his presence that she hardly knew what she did say. “Flora is very troublesome to-night, and Madame has had to go up to her. She will soon be back again.”

Very troublesome indeed. The young lady, taking the advantage of Mr. and Mrs. Castlemaine's absence, had chosen to go into one of her

wildest moods and promenade the house en robe de nuit. At this present moment she was setting Madame at defiance from various turns in the staircases, executing a kind of bo-peep dance.

George North had stepped into the room, and they were standing side by side at the open window in the moonlight, each perfectly conscious of what the companionship was to the other. He began telling her where he had been and what doing; and opened the sketch-book to show her the drawing.

"Sitting in the Chapel ruins all that while alone by moonlight!" exclaimed Ethel. "It is plain you are not a native of Greylands, Mr. North. I question whether any other man in the place would do it."

"I am not a poor simple fisherman, Ethel," he laughed. He had called her "Ethel" some time now, led to it by the example of others at Greylands' Rest.

"I was not thinking altogether of the fishermen. I don't fancy even Harry Castlemaine would do it."

"No?" said Mr. North, an amused smile lingering on his lips.

"At least, I have heard him, more than once, express a dread of the place; that is, of going to it—had he to do such a thing—after dark. Did you see anything?"

"Only——" Mr. North suddenly arrested his words. He had been about to say only Jane Hallet. Various reasons prompted him to close his lips on the point to Miss Reene.

"Only shadows," he continued, amending the phrase. "The moon went under a cloud now and then. It is a most beautiful night out at sea."

Her slender fingers were trembling as she held one side of the sketch-book, he holding the other; trembling with sweet emotion. Not a word of his love had Mr. North said to her; not a word could he say under present circumstances; but Ethel felt that it was hers, hers for all time. Fate might part them in this life; each, it was possible, might marry apart; but he would never love another as he loved her.

"How exact it is!" she cried, looking at the page, which the bright clear moonlight fell upon. "I should know it anywhere. You have even got that one little dark stone in the middle of the wall that seems to have been put in after the other stones and is so unlike them."

"I made it darker that I may know which it is for the painting," he answered. "It will make a nice picture."

"Oh, very. When shall you paint it?"

"That I don't know. Some of these odd days."

"You are not painting at all now."

"No. I don't feel settled enough at the Dolphin for that."

A pause of silence. In changing the position of his hand, still hold-

ing the book, Mr. North somehow let it touch hers. Ethel's voice trembled slightly when next she spoke.

"Shall you be going over to France again?"

"Oh, undoubtedly. In a letter I received this morning from some of my friends there, they inquire when it is to be. I am lingering here long, they think. It was to tell Madame Guise I had heard, for she knows them, that brought me here so late."

"You—you said one day, I remember, that you might probably settle in France," resumed Ethel, inwardly shivering as she spoke it. "Shall you do so?"

"It is quite uncertain, Ethel. If things turn out as—as they ought to turn, I should then settle in England. Probably somewhere in this neighbourhood."

Their eyes met; Ethel looking up, he down. With the yearning love, that sat in each, was mingled an expression of deep sadness.

"Circumstances at present are so very doubtful," resumed Mr. North. "They may turn out well; or very ill——"

"Very ill!" involuntarily interrupted Ethel.

"Yes, they may."

The answer was given in a marked, decisive tone. For the doubt that ran through his mind—that had run through it much lately—was this: If it should indeed prove that the Master of Greylands had dealt ill with Anthony, George North could scarcely bring himself to marry one so closely connected with Greylands' Rest as Ethel.

"And—in that case?" she continued after a pause, during which he seemed to have been lost in thought.

"In that case? Oh, I should become a wandering Arab again, roaming the world at large."

"And settle eventually in France?"

"Very likely—if I settled anywhere. It is all so uncertain, Ethel, that I scarcely like to glance at it. I may hold property in England sometime: and that might necessitate my living on it."

"Do you mean an estate? Such as this?"

"Yes, such as this," he answered, with a passing, curious smile. "Meanwhile I am so happy in the present time, in my idle life—transferring some of the beauties of your country to enrich my portfolio, with the hospitable Dolphin roof over my head and the grand, ever-moving sea before me like a glorious panorama—that I fear I am too willing to forget the future care which may come."

Not another word did either speak: the silence, with its pleasure and its pain, was all too eloquent. The sketch-book was held between them still: and, in turning over its pages to look at former sketches, their hands could not help—or, rather, did not help—coming in contact. What bliss it was!

"Why, you are quite in the dark! Why—dear me! who is it?"

They turned at the voice—that of Madame Guise. She had just left Miss Flora.

“Not in the dark but in the moonlight,” said Mr. North, holding out his hand.

“I did not know you were here,” she answered. “It is late.”

“Very late: I hope you will forgive me. But I have been here some little time. I was taking a sketch by moonlight not far off, and came on, Madame Guise, to say Bon jour, thinking you were alone.”

“It is Bon soir, I think,” returned Madame with a pleasant laugh, as she rang for lights. “Will you not take a seat?”

“Thank you, no,” he replied, putting the sketch-book into the portfolio. “I will take my departure instead, and call again to-morrow at a more seasonable hour. Good night to you, Miss Ethel.”

Ethel put her hand into his and returned his good night in a low tone. When he should have left, the sunshine of the evening would have left with him. Madame Guise, as she often did, stepped across the threshold to walk to the gate with him.

“Did you want anything particular with me, George?” she asked in French, waiting until they were beyond hearing—lest the walls of the house should possess ears.

“Only to tell you that I had a letter from Emma this morning. I should not have come up so late but for believing the family were all out.”

“What does Emma say?”

“Not much. Emma never does, you know. She sends some kind messages to you and a kiss to Marie; and she asks how much longer I mean to linger at Greylands. That is about all.”

“But does she ask nothing about Anthony?”

“She asks in a general way whether we know more yet. Which of course we do not.”

“Have you made anything out of that young Dance, George?”

“Nothing. There’s nothing to be made out of him. Except that I feel convinced the tale he tells is *not* all true. I was in the Friar’s Keep to-night —”

“And saw nothing?” she eagerly interrupted.

“And saw nothing. It was dark and silent and lonely as usual. Sometimes I ask myself what it is that I can reasonably expect to see.”

“Yes, I know; you have thought that from the first,” she said reproachfully. “My brain is at work always: I have no rest by night or by day.”

“Which is very bad for you, Charlotte: it is wearing you out. This living, restless anxiety will not bring elucidation any the surer or quicker.”

“Not bring it! But it will. Will my prayers and my anguish not be heard, think you? God is good.”

They parted with the last words. Charlotte Guise, leaning on the side-gate as she looked after him, raised her eyes to the blue canopy of heaven : and there and then, in her simple faith, poured forth a few words of prayer.

CHAPTER XXX.

CALLING IN THE BLACKSMITH.

THINGS were swiftly coming to a crisis in Miss Hallet's house, though that lady was very far from suspecting it. Time had again gone on since the last chapter, and Walter Dance was about again.

After the evening that witnessed Miss Hallet's fright at the vision of the Grey Friar, she had been very ill. Whether it was the terror itself, or her mortification at having betrayed it, or the fall in the road that affected her, certain it was that she had a somewhat long illness, and was attended by Mr. Parker. No one could be more attentive to her than Jane was ; and Miss Hallet was willing to forget that the girl had given cause for complaint. But Miss Hallet found, now that she was well, that the same cause was still in existence : at all kinds of unseasonable hours Jane would be abroad. Scarcely an evening passed but Jane would make an excuse to go out ; or go out without excuse if none could be framed. She had taken lately to go more to Stilborough, often without assigning any reason for it. The hour at which she would come in was uncertain ; sometimes it was after ten—a very unhallowed hour in the sober estimation of her aunt. One night she had stayed out till one o'clock in the morning, sending Miss Hallet into a perfect fever of suspense and anger. She ran in, panting with the haste she had made up the cliff, and she looked worn, haggard, almost wild. Miss Hallet attacked her with some harsh words ; Jane responded by a burst of tears, and declared in a tone of truth that her aunt could scarcely disbelieve, that she had only been " looking at the sea," and looking at it *alone*.

From that evening, Miss Hallet had taken to watch Jane as a subject of curiosity. Jane was getting nervous. More than once when Miss Hallet had gone upstairs and surprised, unintentionally, Jane in her bed-room—for that lady, since her illness, had walked about in perfectly noiseless list shoes, for comfort only, not to come upon people unexpectedly—she had found Jane standing over a certain open drawer. Jane would shut it hastily and lock it with shaking fingers, and sometimes shake all over besides. Jane had never been nervous in her life, mentally reasoned Miss Hallet : why should she be becoming so now ? Her eyes had habitually a strangely-sad look in them, something like those of a hunted hare ; her face was worn and thin. The sudden appearance of anyone at the door or window would make Jane start and turn pale : she could eat nothing, and would often

be so absorbed in thought as to give contrary answers. "What is the time by the clock, Jane!" her aunt might say, for instance: "No, aunt, I forgot it," might be the answer. Altogether, taking one thing with another, Miss Hallet came to the conclusion that there was some mystery about Jane: just as certain other personages of our story decided there was mystery in the Friar's Keep.

The matter troubled Miss Hallet. She knew not what to do, to whom to speak, or of whom to ask advice. Speaking to Jane herself went for nothing: for the girl invariably denied, with all the unconcern she could put on, that anything was amiss or that she was different from what she used to be. It was now that Miss Hallet felt her isolated position, and the reserve with which she had treated the village.

Her own illness had left her somewhat less strong-minded than before, or she would never have spoken of it. One day, however, when Mrs. Bent came up to pay a social visit, and Jane had gone down the cliff on some necessary errand, Miss Hallet, who had been "tried" that morning by Jane's having an hysterical fit, condescended to speak of Harry Castlemaine in connection with her niece, and to ask Mrs. Bent whether she ever saw them together now.

"Pretty nearly every other evening," was the plain and most unwelcome answer.

Miss Hallet coughed to cover a groan of censure. "Where do they walk to?" she asked.

"Mostly under the high cliff towards the limpets. It's lonely there at night—nobody to be met with ever."

"Do you walk there—that you should see them?" asked keen Miss Hallet.

"To tell you the truth, I have gone there on purpose to see," was the landlady's unblushing answer. "I don't approve of it. It's very foolish of Jane."

"Foolish: yes, very: but Jane would never behave lightly," returned Miss Hallet, a blush of resentment on her thin cheeks.

"I don't say she would; Jane ought to have better sense than that. But it is pretty nigh as bad to give rise to talk," added candid Mrs. Bent: "many a good name has been tarnished without worse cause. It's not nice news, either, to be carried up to Greylands' Rest."

"Is it carried there, Mrs. Bent?"

"Not yet, that I know of. But it will be one of these days. I should put a summary stop to it, Miss Hallet."

"Yes, yes," said the unfortunate lady, smoothing her mittened hands together nervously, as she inwardly wondered how that was to be done, with Jane in her present temper. And, perplexed with her many difficulties, she began enlarging upon Jane's new and strange moods, even mentioning the locked drawer she had surprised Jane at, and openly wondering what she kept in it.

"Love-letters," curtly observed discerning Mrs. Bent.

"Love-letters!" ejaculated Miss Hallet, who had never had a love-letter in her life, and looked upon them as no better than slow poison.

"There's not a doubt of it. His. I daresay he has got a lot of Jane's. I gave her a bit of my mind the day before yesterday when she came to the inn to bring back the newspaper," added Mrs. Bent. "Gave it plainly, too."

"And—how did Jane receive it?"

"As meek as any lamb. 'I am not the imprudent girl you appear to think me, Mrs. Bent,' says she, with her cheeks as red as our cock's comb when he has been fighting. 'Mr. Harry Castlemaine would not like to hear you say this,' she went on. 'Mr. Harry Castlemaine might lump it,' I answered her. 'It wouldn't affect him much any way, I expect, Jane Hallet. Mr. Harry Castlemaine might set the sea afire with a trolley-load of burning tar-barrels if he so minded, and folks would just wink at him; while you would have the place about your ears if you dropped in but half a thimbleful.' Jane wished me good morning at that, and betook herself away."

Mrs. Bent's visit ended with this. Upon her departure, Miss Hallet put on her shawl and bonnet and proceeded to take her daily walk outside the door in the sun, pacing the narrow path from end to end. After Mrs. Bent's information, she could no longer doubt that Jane's changed mood must be owing to this acquaintanceship with Mr. Harry Castlemaine. A love affair, of course!—girls were so idiotic!—and Jane's trouble must arise from the knowledge that it could end in nothing. So impossible had it seemed to Miss Hallet that Jane, with her good sense, could really have anything to say, in this way, to the son of the Master of Greylands, that since the night of the expedition when she had gone after Jane to watch her, and received her fright as the result, she had suffered the idea by degrees to drop from her mind: and this revelation of Mrs. Bent's was as much a shock to her as though she had never had a former hint of it.

"Jane must have lost her head!" soliloquised the angry lady, her face very stern. "She must know it cannot come to anything. They stand as far apart as the two poles. Our family was good in the old days; as good perhaps as that of the Castlemaines; but things altered with us. And I went out as lady's-maid, for it was that, not companion, and they know it, and I daresay put me, in their thoughts, on a level with their own servants. Mr. Castlemaine is polite when he meets me and takes his hat off, and sometimes stays to chat for a minute: but he would no more think my niece a fit wife for his son than he would think the poorest fisherman's girl in the place fit. Jane *must* have lost her senses!"

Miss Hallet stopped to draw her shawl more closely round her, fo

the wind was brisk to-day ; and then resumed her promenade and her reflections.

"Rather than the folly should continue, I would go direct to the Master of Greylands, and tell him. He would pretty soon stop it. And I *will* do it, if I can make no impression on Jane. I should like to know, though, before speaking to her, what footing they are upon : whether it is but a foolish fancy for each other, meaning nothing, or whether she considers it to be more serious. He cannot have been so dishonourable as to say anything about marriage ! At least, I—I hope not. He might as well offer her the stars : and Jane ought to know there's as much chance of the one as the other. I wonder what is in the love-letters ?"

Miss Hallet took a turn or two, revolving this one point. A wish crossed her that she could read the letters. She wished it not for curiosity's sake : in truth, she would not have touched them willingly with a pair of tongs : but that their contents might guide her own conduct. If the letters really contained nothing but nonsense—boyish nonsense, Miss Hallet termed it—she might deal with the matter with Jane alone : but if Mr. Harry had been so absurd as to fill her up with notions of marriage, why then she would carry the affair up to Greylands' Rest, and leave it to be dealt with by Greylands' master.

Entering her house, she went upstairs. It was not likely that Jane had left the drawer unlocked ; still it might have happened so, from inadvertence or else. But no. Miss Hallet stood in Jane's room, and pulled at the drawer in question, which was the first long drawer in the chest. It resisted her efforts. Taking her own keys from her pocket, she tried every likely one, but none would fit. Nevertheless, she determined to get to those letters on the first opportunity, believing it to lie in her duty. Not a shade of doubt arose in her mind as to Mrs. Bent's clever theory : she was as sure the drawer contained Harry Castlemaine's love-letters, as though she had it open and saw them lying before her. Love-letters, and nothing else. What else, was there, that Jane should care to conceal ?

"Jane's instincts are those of a lady," thought Miss Hallet, looking round the neat room approvingly : at the pretty taste displayed, at the little ornamental things on the muslin-draped dressing-table. "Yes, they are. And there's her Bible and Prayer-book on their own stand ; and there's—but—dear me ! where on earth did *these* spring from ?"

She had come to a glass of hot-house flowers. Not many. Half a dozen, or so ; but they were fresh and of rare excellence.

"Jane must have brought them in last night. Smuggled them in, I should say, for I saw none in her hand. It is easy to know where they came from : there's only one hot-house in the whole place, and that's at Greylands' Rest."

Miss Hallet went down more vexed than she had come up. She

was very precise and strait-laced : no one could deny that : but here was surely enough food to disturb her. Just after she had resumed her walk outside, her mind running upon how she could best contrive to have the drawer opened, and so get at the love-letters, Jane appeared.

Slowly and wearily was she ascending the cliff, as if she could hardly put one foot before the other. Miss Hallet could but notice it. Her face was pale ; the one unoccupied arm hung down heavily, the head was bent.

"You look tired to death, Jane ! What have you been doing to fatigue yourself like that ?"

Jane started at the salutation, lifted her head, and saw her aunt. As if by magic, her listless manner changed, and she ran up the short bit of remaining path briskly. Her pale face had taken quite a glow of colour when she reached Miss Hallet.

"I am not tired, aunt. I was only thinking."

"Thinking of what ?" returned Miss Hallet. "You looked and walked as though you were tired : that's all I know."

"Of something Susan Pike has just told me," laughed Jane. "It might have turned out to be no laughing matter, though. Jack Tuff has taken a drop too much this morning and fallen out of a little boat he got into. Susan says he came up the beach like a drowned rat."

Jane went into the house while talking, and put down the basket she had carried. Miss Hallet followed her.

"I could only get the scrag end this morning, aunt : the best end was sold. So it must be boiled. And there's the newspaper, aunt : Mrs. Bent ran across to me with it."

"Put it on at once, then, with a sliced carrot or two," said Miss Hallet, alluding to the meat.

"And bacon," resumed Jane, "is a halfpenny a pound dearer. I think, aunt, it would be well to buy a good-sized piece of bacon at Stilborough. I am sure we give Pike a penny a pound more than we should pay there."

"Well—yes—it might be," acknowledged Miss Hallet for once : who very rarely listened to offered suggestions.

"I could bring it back this afternoon," observed Jane.

"What should take you to Stilborough this afternoon, pray ?"

"I want to take the socks in. And you know, aunt—I told you—that Mrs. Pugh asked me to go to tea there one day this week : I may as well stay with her to-day."

Jane had expected no end of opposition ; but Miss Hallet made none. She went out to walk again without further remark, leaving Jane to the household duties. It turned out that Susan Pike was going to Stilborough, being also invited to Mrs. Pugh's. Jane mentioned it to her aunt at dinner, but Miss Hallet answered nothing.

About four o'clock, that damsel, attired in all the colours of the rainbow and as gay as a harlequin, came running up the cliff to call for Jane. Jane, dressed neatly, and looking very nice as usual, was ready for her; and they started together, Jane carrying her paper of socks and an umbrella.

"Well I never, Jane! you are not a going to lug along that there big umberella, are you?" cried Miss Susan, halting at the threshold, and putting up a striped parasol the size of a dinner-plate.

"I am not sure about the weather," returned Jane, looking at the sky. "I should not like to get wet."

Miss Hallet sat down to read the newspaper after they were gone, took her tea, and at dusk put on her things to go down the cliff. It was a very dull evening, dark before its time: heavy clouds of lead colour covered the sky. In a remote angle of the village lived the blacksmith, one Joe Brown; a small, silent, sooty kind of man in a leather apron, who might be seen at his forge from morning to night. He was there now, hammering at a piece of iron, as Miss Hallet entered.

"Good evening, Brown."

Brown looked up at the address, and discerned the speaker by the red glare of his fire—Miss Hallet. He touched his hair in answer, and gave her back the good evening.

She told him at once what she wanted, putting her veil aside to speak. The key of a drawer had been mislaid in her house, and she wished Brown to come and open it.

"Unlock him, or pick him, mum?" asked Brown.

"Only to unlock it."

"Won't the morrow do, mum? I be over busy to-night."

"No, the morrow will not do," replied Miss Hallet, in one of those decisive tones that carry weight. "I want it opened to-night, and you must come at once. I shall pay you well."

So the man yielded: saying that in five minutes he would leave his forge, and be up the cliff almost as soon as she was. He kept his word: and Miss Hallet had but just got her things off when he arrived, carrying a huge bunch of keys of various sizes. It was beginning to rain. Not unfrequently was he called out on a similar errand, and would take with him either these keys, or instruments for picking a lock, as might be required.

She led the way upstairs to Jane's room, and pointed out the drawer. Brown stooped to look at the lock, holding the candle close, and at the second trial, put in a key that turned easily. He drew the drawer a little open to show that the work was done. Nothing was to be seen but a large sheet of white paper, covering the drawer half way up. The contents, whatever they might be, were under it.

"Thank you," said Miss Hallet, closing the drawer again, while he took the key off the bunch at her request, to lend her until the morn-

ing. "Don't mention this little matter, Brown, will you be so good," she added, handing the man a shilling. "I do not care that my niece or the neighbours should believe me careless with my keys." And he readily promised.

The rain was now pouring down in torrents. Miss Hallet stood at the front door with the man, really sorry that he should have to go through such rain.

"It ain't nothing, mum," he said. And, taking his leather apron off to throw over his shoulders, Brown went swinging away.

As the echo of his footsteps, descending the cliff, died away on her ear, Miss Hallet slipped the bolt of the house-door, and went up-stairs again. Putting the candle down on the white covering; for Miss Hallet and Jane had toilette covers in their rooms as well as their betters; she opened the drawer again. If the sheet of white paper covered only love-letters, there must be an astonishing heap of them: the colour flew into Miss Hallet's cheeks as an idea dawned upon her that there might be presents besides.

She pulled a chair forward, and drew the candle close to the edge of the drawers, preparing herself for a long sitting. Not a single letter would she leave unread: no, nor a single word in any one of them. She was safe for two good hours, for Jane was not likely to be in before nine: it might not be so soon as that if the two girls waited at Stilborough for the storm to cease.

Setting her spectacles on her nose, Miss Hallet lifted the white paper off the contents of the drawer; and then sat gazing in surprise. There were no love-letters: no letters of any kind. The bottom of the drawer was lined with some delicate looking little articles, that she took to be dolls' clothes. Pretty little cambric caps, their borders crimped with a silver knife by Jane's deft fingers; miniature frocks; small bed-gowns—and such like.

"Why, what on earth!" began Miss Hallet, after a prolonged stare of perplexity—and in her bewildered astonishment, she gingerly took up one of the little caps and turned it about close to her spectacles.

All in a moment, with a rush and a whirl; a rush of dread in her heart, a whirl of dreadful confusion in her brain; the truth came to Miss Hallet. She staggered a step or two back to the waiting chair, and fell down on it, faint and sick. The appearance of the Grey Friar had brought most grievous terror to her; but it had not brought the awful dismay of this.

For the dainty wardrobe was not a doll's wardrobe but a baby's.

(To be continued.)

GIPSYING.

BY ANNE BEALE.

HOW delightful was that day among the Kentish Downs, gipsying and falling in with gipsies. We began it by violeting in the woods. Bounteous spring was lavish of her gifts, as usual : the trees were dressing themselves slowly and daintily in their garments of delicate green and yellow ; the dews bathed the tender leaves and the sunbeams dried them, while a chorus of birds added the *réveillé* to this gradually developed toilette. Nature does not hurry as man does. Her progress is noiseless but sure. There seemed to be no earth, for all was yielding moss—moss and flowers. It was a green sky thickly starred with primroses, while half hidden violets peeped forth from every corner, and the graceful pink-and-white anemone drooped above them, as if breathing in the odours she lacked herself.

On and on, with the scents and flowers, until we came upon a sward golden with daffodils, where we stayed awhile to contemplate a small gipsy camp. Skirting the wood was a green walk, with trees on the right and a moss-covered bank on the left, crowned with more trees and hawthorn. It was a gipsy Decameron. For more than half a century the kindly owner of the pleasure had suffered these homeless wanderers, and they still came occasionally, though not as fearlessly as of old. The proverbial tea-kettle was there, hung on the thrice-crossed sticks, over a flaming fire pillaged from the neighbouring trees. A ragged family of bronzed, black-eyed, black-haired, swarthy Egyptians, Bohemians, Tigenner, or Gitanos, as may be, were seated on the grass around it, while a man stood near a pony, which he had just released from a cart. The animal was browsing, happily unconscious of the laws of *meum* and *tuum* : the man and his human party glanced furtively around as we approached.

They looked so picturesque that we should have felt even more self-reproach at plucking them from their temporary root than we had felt for the flowers which now filled our baskets ; so we contemplated them from a distance, more as culprits than judges. Who and what were these strange people ? It was evident, from a few words of their language that reached us, that they were neither British nor Irish. Is their dialect Indian, as has been asserted, and did they migrate from India at the time of the great Mohammedan invasion of Timur Beg ? They seem, like the Jews, to be wanderers on the face of the earth, and like them, preserve their distinctive habits and features. They have, apparently, no religion, although they are said to have represented themselves as Christian pilgrims when they first swarmed into Paris, in 1427. Then they professed to have been driven out of Egypt by the

Mussulmans ; now they are almost driven out of England by the Christians, if this remnant of the Kentish gipsies be a type of the race. Their old haunts are no longer their homes. The wide-stretching tableland around their present temporary retreat, once their own, as if by right of purchase, is now cultivated and enclosed ; ploughed fields are interspersed among the smooth, turfy, breezy downs, and utility has replaced the picturesque. The gipsy tent rises no more from the green sward, and the farmsteads are, consequently, unplundered. So it is in the woodlands. Trees are felled, and houses built, and the wanderers, whether swallows or gipsies, seek their leafy abodes in vain. A century ago, Gipsy Hill and Norwood were real rural retreats whither gipsies resorted.

Mr. William Gardner, a kind and excellent doctor, who practised over fifty years in that neighbourhood, used to tell wonderful stories of this singular race. He was a philanthropic, unsuspicious man, and allowed himself to be taken to their remote haunts, whither few people cared to go. They called him their "Good Doctor," and waylaid him whenever any serious illness baffled their own skill, or would not yield to their charms, or astrological knowledge.

On one occasion he was returning at midnight through a then solitary wood-walk, trusting more to his horse than himself for the way. He was stopped by two men, whom he supposed to be robbers, and helped gently from his horse, for he was slightly lame. One man assured him that he—their good doctor—should come to no harm if he would be quiet, while the other held his horse. It was pitch-dark but the guide led him or half carried him, through the wood, to a covert where fire-light revealed a gipsy-tent and many wild, agitated figures. One of the chiefs of the tribe, had had a serious accident, and lay on the ground, seemingly dying. The doctor's large pockets were full of surgical instruments and appliances, and he set to work amid the lamentations of the women and the growls of men and dogs. He remained some hours, and did not leave the patient until he believed him out of danger. Then the swarthy people thanked him loudly, and the man who brought him there, re-conducted him to the spot where he had found him. Here his horse was browsing quietly, watched by the other gipsy. They helped him to his back, and then one took the bridle and led him through the dark, safely to his house. He waited for a bottle of medicine, received directions, and departed.

Mr. Gardner heard no more of them at that time ; but on some future day, when traversing the wood by sunlight, he was again arrested by the gipsies who had been watching for him. They excused themselves for troubling him, assured him of his safety, and apologised for blindfolding him. He did not quite like it, but replacing their doubtful bandage by his own handkerchief, he submitted. In course of time, he found himself in daylight again, where he certainly had never been before. A

woman was in mortal agony in the midst of a noisy crew, who clamoured to him for aid ; he gave it, and, as he said, brought another wretched little wanderer into the gipsy-world. He saw that the mother was young and marvellously handsome, and found that she belonged to one of the men who had fetched him. This man thanked him with something like tears, and thrust money into his hand, which he returned. He again apologised for blindfolding him when the doctor once more left his patient out of danger, who, but for him, would have died. He was taken safely through the wood, and found himself at a spot nearer home than that at which he entered. On inquiry afterwards, he discovered that several robberies had been committed in the neighbourhood, it was supposed by the gipsies, but that their haunt had not been penetrated. He laughed when he said he had penetrated it, and congratulated himself on not having been robbed. Indeed, the gipsies politely informed him that neither he nor his need fear loss or cross from them. And this happened not far from where our Crystal Palace now stands, and was told by the " Good Doctor " himself some fifteen years ago !

From this diversion into Surrey, we must return to Kent, and to the dwindling remnant of this once numerous race. We were compelled to pass the little encampment. As we did so, an old woman with a red shawl over her head, and a child on her lap, turned round sharply. She had more of the Sybil than the hag in her appearance, and must have been very handsome. Her hair was still black, her eyes bright and piercing, and her features bold and sharp.

" We're just warming our kettle, gentlefolk, to give the child that's ill some tea. The Squire knows us these fifty years. Let me tell your fortunes, bless your beautiful face," she began.

" Sansparelle ! Is that you ? Where is Clorandy ? " asked one of our party.

This bronzed, handsome old woman had been known in the neighbourhood ever since her youth. She had frequented it with a sister, handsomer still ; but neither had appeared for some years.

" Clorandy'll be at the House, my lady. She have been ill. We're not so young as we was, and we are all going down in the world. Cross my hand with a bit o'silver for the sake of old times."

The hand was crossed, while the by-standers and sitters looked on inquisitive. They were types of the past and present. When the old woman was young the gipsies were a numerous and powerful race, setting right and might pretty much at defiance, and she had come and gone as she liked, supported by her beauty, impudence, and palmistry. The children and grandchildren who surrounded her were degenerate, and had more of the mendicant than the bold fortune-teller in their air. When she and her sister first appeared in the neighbourhood, their beauty and effrontery were their passports. They were received by the gentry, as well as their domestics, because they were handsome and

amusing ; and many an aristocratic damsel was not above hearing of her future from these wild gipsy girls. They read the palm-lines skilfully, made lucky hits at handsome and rich lovers, and wonderful guesses at events, past and present, until their periodical visits were expected and well paid. They were always picturesquely dressed ; sometimes with the typical black feathers nodding from their bonnets, and many-patterned shawls twisted about their figures ; at others with coquettish red hoods drawn over their raven hair, and striped petticoats of red and white floating beneath. Your brunette always knows that these are the colours that become her. They called themselves *Clorandy* and *Sansparelle Scamp* ; *Clorandy*, or *Clorinda*, was not an uncommon name amongst them, but *Sansparelle* was original, having been derived, so said its owner, from the figure-head of a ship. She anglicised the *Sans* ; not giving herself the benefit of the *Sanspareil*, which the more accomplished linguist declared to be her due, for both sisters were unparallelled in the daring, wild, brilliant beauty of the East. *Scamp* was the name of their tribe. Was it given them ironically, or derived from *Scamper* ? Nobody knew ; but they boasted of it and other names, as very old, and of their family as especially ancient. They were as proud of their descent from some fabulous ancestor as is our aristocrat who traces from the Deluge. Pride of family gives a marvellous prestige to us all from noble to gipsy.

For half a century these women had reappeared periodically, sometimes alone, sometimes together ; frequently with children in their arms, hoods, or dragging at their skirts : always with tins, baskets, or other articles for sale. The rest of the tribe picketted at a distance, too wise to interfere with them : but they never returned to their tent from the Squire's without tangible proofs of their popularity.

It was in this kindly Squire's wood-walk that *Sansparelle* and her brood now squatted, and there we left them, unmolested, to pursue our own interrupted gipsying. We left the sheltering, flower-carpetted woods, for the unsheltered downs. The scene was bare and bleak. Miles of flat country with roads crossing and re-crossing each other, and no landmarks but the sign-posts. Patches of red, green, and brown alternated ; for the plough had fallowed portions of the once mossy turf, and the seed sown had not yet sprouted except in parts. But nature soon asserts herself. Over the bare expanse creep, flit, and frolic the shadows of the clouds, giving variety and softness to sameness and hardness. Up springs a lark ! Another and another and another. The air, clouds, sky seem suddenly alive with a thrilling melody for which we have no name, no possible description. The quivering wings rise, float, disappear, but still the unutterable song descends, that would kindle a desert into harmonious life. We exclaim, in the wonderful metre of Shelley—
itself lark-like in its spontaneity,

"What thou art we know not;
 What is most like thee?
 From rainbow clouds there flow not
 Drops so bright to see
 As from thy presence showers a rain of melody."

Keenly listening, we linger and linger, drinking in this "rain" and straining our eyes after the —

"Ethereal minstrel, pilgrim of the sky."

The soul has glimpses of heaven, and this was one. She soars with the lark, above the clouds into the height where reigns the invisible God, and for the moment is elevated and purified. For the moment! How brief such glimpses are! And how soon she turns earthward again. We turned homewards through more downs and more violet-banks, and encountered more gipsies. Clorandy was one of them. She was roaming about the Squire's offices, looking for somebody, but keeping at a distance from the domestics. She looked poor and ill.

"Is that you, Clorandy? Where have you been so long?"

"Oh, my lady, I've been ill in a house at Dover. Couldn't move for rheumatism. Couldn't mend a chair or make a basket to earn an honest shilling. I borrowed this bonnet to come here, for my head's racked with pain. I'm all rags, as you see. If you had some old shoes, or a cast-off gown, or a bit of a shawl, Lord bless ye!"

It was the every-day story of human life. The once bright, young, handsome, cleverly-cunning Clorandy was drooping, ill, old and haggard. Still she received all and more than she asked, for do we not all grow old together? What if she came alone, and made the worst of herself to excite compassion? "We must all lie alike in our graves." There was a real tear in her black eye when she said, "I wish I could pray and be good as you tell me, but I haven't been used to it. We aren't o' the same sort; but Clorandy'll tell your fortune true as the light."

She departed with treasures of raiment, money, and food. She needed them; but she needed still more that "light" which she named metaphorically. Let those who are blest with it strive to pour it into blind eyes such as hers. We call wandering and useless members of society Bohemians, after the gipsies, who are no more Bohemian than city Arabs are Arabian. But they are homeless, and like Cain, wanderers on the face of the earth in search of a habitation and a name. It matters not whether they roam from railway-arch to sewer, from court to alley, from fetid air to noxious vapour, or whether they migrate from wood to down, from common to wayside, from piercing cold to penetrating fog, they are human and created for good. It behoves us all to understand the true meaning of humanity and goodness, to instruct those who do not, and to strive to bring under the influence of true Christianity, not only the city Arabs, but the Sansparelles, Clorandys, and innumerable "Scamps" of this wicked world.

NINA, THE WITCH.

LATE one evening Thomas, now Maitre Thomas Méchin, came home from a long visit which he had been paying his uncle of Blossville. As he stood on the kitchen hearth unfastening his heavy cloak, he asked Jeanne for the news of Manneville. Jeanne pursed up her lips and looked firm. News! she knew of no news. She was not a gadder like Laure, thank heaven. Then, in the same breath she added: "The curé's servant is ill, and Benjamin, whose boy was bewitched, you know, broke his arm last week, and your cousin Séraphine was married on Thursday, in Fontaine, to a butcher, and they say that Nina, the witch, must be dead, for no one has seen her for the last ten days."

Thomas looked stunned. "Any one could see," said Jeanne to Laure, "how fond he had been of his cousin. For when I told him she was married he just stared and walked out of the house."

Yes, out into the darkness of the night went Thomas. A chill rain was falling, but he heeded it not. He crossed the bridge; he went through the gloomy *Passée*, and as the narrow plank that led over to the island was not in its usual place, he did not look for it, but waded through the river till he stood on the other shore. From this spot he should have seen the light in Nina's cottage; but he did not. No yawning grave could be darker than the island on this dark night. He raised his voice and called aloud:

"Nina!"

A startled bird rustled in a tree above his head, and some little frightened creature scampered away close by his side, then all was still again.

Thomas went on, stumbling in the darkness, straight to the cottage he went, seeming to find it by instinct as a bird finds its nest. It was black and silent, but the door was on the latch, and as Thomas opened it and went in, the smouldering ashes on the hearth told him that Nina was not dead after all. In a moment he had found an old iron candlestick, and lit the end of tallow candle in it, and even before he had put it down on the table, he had seen Nina.

Yes, there was Nina sitting on the chair opposite him, Nina with white lips and dark, sunken eyes, Nina pale as death and looking like one who has been to Death's own door.

"Nina, you are ill," said Thomas.

"No," she answered with strange apathy.

"You are ill—did no one come nigh you?"

"No one," answered Nina.

Thomas set his teeth and clenched his fists in mute anger to think how hardened were the hearts of her kind against this poor girl.

"And so they would have let you die alone," he muttered.

"Yes," replied Nina; "they would."

"Nina, I was away or that should not have been—but I am at home now and——"

"I want nothing," said Nina. "I worked to-day, but I am not strong yet and——"

She grew very white. Thomas quickly applied his brandy flask to her lips, and though she turned away from it with a shudder, she was too weak to resist him; but even that fiery draught did not seem to bring back life to her chilled heart. She did not faint as he had feared she would, but she sat there before him like one half dead. Thomas thrust a whole faggot of wood on the hearth, till there shot up such a blaze as filled the room. He carried Nina, chair and all, to the warm glow; he chafed her icy hands till something like the warmth of life returned to them; he took off his heavy cloak and wrapped her in it, and Nina submitted to it all with the apathy of recent illness.

Sorrow and remorse filled the young man's heart as he saw her so helpless.

"Oh, Nina, forgive me," he said; "forgive me, Nina," and yielding to an impulse which might not be wise, but which was honest, he stooped, and clasped her in an embrace full of repentant tenderness.

But never was attempted kiss so fatal as this. Before his lips could touch her cheek, Nina had sprung to her feet with a cry, and stood before him, herself once more. The strong spirit he had forced her to drink had given her new life. The light had come back to her eyes, the colour to her cheeks and the old hatred to her heart.

"How dare you?" she cried, "how dare you?"

"Nina," entreated Thomas, "let us be friends."

"Never!" she replied, clenching her small hands; "I hate you."

"Do you, Nina?" asked Thomas, in seeming wonder.

"You know I do, and if you do not hate me too, you are base."

"But why should I hate you, Nina?"

"Because so far as I could I have injured you," she answered, her passion rising with his calmness; "have you forgotten it?"

"You broke my French horn; well, I have got another. You bit me once"—he smiled as he said it; "well, Nina, your little teeth drew blood, but even as they left no scar on my cheek, so all your wrong doing has done me no harm—none."

Her eyes flashed, her lips quivered. "Have you forgotten the treasure?" she asked in a low tone. "Well then, I found it; I took it, and it was on your land. Yes, I found it beneath the three stones—the treasure of Père Jean, the treasure that could have made a rich man of you; I found it and I took it."

She stood before him with extended hand, in the dramatic though unconscious beauty of her southern blood. But though he eyed her with strange keenness, as if his glance would penetrate the very soul of this passionate young creature, it was coolly that Thomas replied :

"You found nine five-franc pieces, six of which you gave me for rent the next morning, Nina : nine and no more."

Nina raised her two hands to her forehead, and pushing back her hair, she looked at Thomas.

"Then it was you who put that money there," she gasped; "it was you."

Thomas nodded, without looking at her, and sat down on a chair.

"And so," said Nina, "when I met you there you had come to hide the money and not for the rent, and when I saw you there again in the morning, you had come to see if I had taken it: well there is something I did not mean to tell you; but I will, and taunt me with your alms after that, or dare to say that I have not injured you! Your father wrote to his sister to come. He wanted you to marry your cousin. Your aunt never came, and her daughter is another man's wife. Well, that was my doing."

This time Thomas started to his feet, his eyes sparkling with anger.

"It is not true," he cried, "you could not—you dared not."

"I dared not!" she laughed scornfully, "and I could not! As I was crossing the bridge, I saw you in your kitchen, giving the letter to Benjamin's boy, whom I had bewitched, you know, and I bewitched him again—for I stole the letter."

Thomas sat down again, and was long silent. When he spoke he was so calm that the triumphant light died out of Nina's eyes.

"You did a wicked thing," he said. "God forgive you, Nina, but you also did me a great good," he added with a sigh of relief. "If my poor father had exacted it, I would have married my cousin; but my wedding-day would have been the darkest in my life—no, I cannot think of it," he exclaimed, with something like passion.

Nina looked bewildered.

"Then, you did not like her?" said she.

"Like *her*!" he replied, looking her full in the face. "No, Nina, I did not like her; I liked another girl; but you are no witch, Nina; you are no witch, after all."

No, truly, Nina was no witch, for the revelation came to her like a thunder bolt falling at her feet. At first she seemed stunned, and it was not till Thomas plainly said, "And now, Nina, will you be my wife?" that she rallied.

"You cannot mean it. You say it to make a jest of me and have *your* revenge," she cried almost wildly. "How you would laugh if I were to believe you! But I do not; oh no, I do not."

"Try me, Nina."

She snatched up the light, and holding it aloft, she bent her dark eyes on his face; but Thomas only smiled. Then putting down the light, Nina went and fetched a broken ink-bottle, an old pen, and a scrap of paper, and she set them before him.

"Write it down," she said imperiously; "write that unless you marry me before a month is out, you will forfeit something—your house, your land—no matter what."

Thomas took the pen, and whilst Nina, holding the light, looked over his shoulder with feverish earnestness, he wrote:—

"I, Thomas Méchin, promise to marry Philippina Sano this day week. Should I fail to do so, I will give her my house by the bridge, to be hers for ever."

Having signed this pledge, Thomas turned to Nina and said coolly:

"I put this day week because you are a lonely girl, Nina, and I must not come dangling here after you. It would not do."

"Then, it is true?" was all Nina answered; "it is true?"

"This is Saturday," continued Thomas, still cool and business-like; "so we can have our banns out to-morrow, Nina. You must give me your certificate of birth, you know."

"And you like me!" said Nina, with a cry between joy and anguish. "It is not pity, as I thought. All Manneville hates and scorns me—my own mother never liked me—but *you* like me."

"Yes, I like you, Nina; and now you have my pledge," he added, thrusting the paper in her hand and closing her fingers upon it, "but where is yours to me?"

"What pledge can I give you?" asked Nina, opening her eyes in wonder.

"Well, Nina, when I wanted to kiss you seven years ago, you bit me, and when I was going to kiss you a while back, you called me names. So now, if you will give me an honest kiss, such a kiss as a good girl gives to the man who is to be her husband in a week, I shall hold you pledged to me as I am pledged to you."

Nina blushed and smiled divinely, Thomas thought, then putting her two hands on his shoulders she held up her face to his, modestly, yet frankly.

"And now," she said, when he had kissed her, "tell me why you like me."

She had not moved away, and the face that looked up to his was the loveliest that Thomas had ever seen.

"You are beautiful, Nina," he replied in a low voice, "but it is not that. Seven years ago I found you not far from here, a poor, forlorn child, mad with despair. I had done you a great wrong, and that wrong seemed to make you mine. When I took you in my arms that night, Nina, and tried to soothe you, I felt that you belonged to me, and from that hour I was fond of you. I did not know how; I was only a lad;

but I soon found it out. And now, Nina, you will marry me this day week."

"Yes," answered Nina dreamily.

"And, Nina, we will spend our wedding-day with my uncle, who lives beyond Fontaine. He is old, and cannot come to us."

Again Nina said "yes." So Thomas improved his opportunity. He did not speak about the pitcher, knowing Nina need carry a pitcher no more, but he spoke about going to mass every Sunday, and Nina, who looked as if she could never say him nay, again replied softly, "I will do as you wish."

"And now good-night, Nina," said Thomas, with a sigh, "for I must go and I must not come often either; for I do not want you to be talked about, as you are a lonely girl."

"Are you rich?" asked Nina, suddenly.

"I am not, Nina, but neither am I poor."

"I am rich," she said, with sparkling eyes; "I found five hundred francs in silver, hidden in my mother's mattress. And I have jewels, too," added Nina, "earrings, brooches, and chains. They have come down to me from the Sanos, who were great people once; but when they fell down in the world, my mother was ashamed, and that was why we came here."

Thomas smiled at her boasting, and again said "good-night." He had scarcely reached the river when Nina overtook him with a light in her hand. She wanted to put the plank in its place, she said; but Thomas asked, a little shortly, if he could not wade his way out as he had waded it in?

"You waded through that cold water!" said Nina, who had not thought of it before, and who shuddered to think of it now: as she heard it gurgling at her feet in the darkness. "And there are deep places in it, and you might have been drowned."

"I can swim," replied Thomas, drily. "Go in, Nina."

"Ah! you like me, you do like me," she said. The flickering light fell on her face, and Thomas could read there the ever new wonder which this strange tale of love wakened in the girl's heart. He did not ask if she liked him; she was to be his wife that day week; Thomas wanted to know no more, and so they parted.

Early the next morning Thomas went over to the island. He found Nina very well, and at her loom, though it was Sunday. Somewhat austere he informed her that she would have to give that up, and somewhat defiantly Nina answered, "Indeed." A change had come over Nina since they had parted, but Thomas chose to be blind. He explained his visit by asking for her certificate of birth, which she handed him at once, and seeing her so far compliant, Thomas requested his betrothed to go to high mass with him that morning. Without hesitation Nina answered that he would find her under the church porch at half past ten.

At a quarter past ten Thomas was prowling round the church, in a manner that surprised Manneville; but surprise became amazement when, as the half struck, Nina, the witch, who had not entered the church for years, joined him under the porch. She was dressed as no girl in Manneville had been dressed before; for she wore a silk petticoat and a velvet jacket. The little cap perched on the top of her head was of costly lace, her long earrings were of gold, a gold chain was wound three times round her neck, and her little ungloved hands showed a ring on every finger. Of course, when she went in with Thomas and sat down by his side, on the bench of the Méchins, Manneville knew what was coming before the curé read the banns. When mass was over Thomas and Nina left the church arm-in-arm, and had a walk on the road to Fontaine, as is the Sunday custom of Manneville; then they turned back together till they came to the island. As they parted Thomas told Nina that he would come and see her before the next Saturday.

"Why so?" she asked, with one foot on the plank which she was going to cross.

"To talk about the house."

"There is no need," replied Nina, and without even looking at him, she went on.

Thomas lingered about the spot, and in the Sabbath stillness he soon heard her loom at work again.

The young man could not wait till his wedding-day to know how it fared with Nina. On the Wednesday evening he stole into the island, and going round to the window of Nina's cottage, he looked in at her. She stood by the table, the beautiful girl who was to be his wife so soon. She was making up a bundle, into which she slipped something that glittered like gold, as it left her hand, and Thomas thought that it looked very like her chain. It was not for her beauty that he loved her, but yet how handsome she was! Never had he seen a face like hers, so witching, so soft, so fair, 'spite her dark eyes. Surely, it was something to have that charming face ever before him, all the days or his life! Suddenly Nina, leaving the table, went up to the window. In a moment Thomas had slipped round the cottage. He stayed a good while there watching the door. When he came back, the window was black, and the lovely vision was gone. "It is not worth while going home," thought Thomas, so still watching the door, he walked about the island till the stars faded out of the sky and it grew rosy red in the blush of dawn. Just as the birds began to twitter, the cottage door opened, and Nina came out with her bundle in her hand. She crossed the plank; she left Manneville; she took the road to Fontaine; she walked on till she reached the wayside cross, then happening to look back she saw Thomas close behind her. He put no questions; he expressed no wonder; but he walked by her side as if they were bent

on the same journey, and must needs take the same road. Nina walked on for a quarter of an hour, then suddenly stood still and, without a word, turned back towards Manneville. Thomas turned back too, merely saying :

"Let me carry your bundle, Nina."

She let him take it from her hand, and so they went back till they reached the island. Without attempting to enter it with her, Thomas gave Nina her bundle again, and with a kindly good morning, he left her.

They were to be married on the Saturday. On the Friday afternoon Thomas went to Nina's cottage, and merely putting in his head at the door, he said briefly :

"Are you coming to confession, Nina?"

"Why should I?" asked Nina, turning round sharply.

"Because the curé will not marry us otherwise," shortly replied Thomas.

Nina pondered awhile, then said she would go to the church presently; but when Thomas said he would wait for her, she saw she could not get rid of him, and with an impatient frown, she walked out of the cottage.

"Lock the door, Nina," said Thomas.

"There is no need."

Thomas took out the key and put it in his pocket.

"Are you already master?" she asked.

"I am master in your house and you are mistress in mine, Nina."

Nina smiled scornfully. As they crossed the bridge, Thomas said carelessly, that as they were too early for the curé, perhaps Nina would come in and look at the house.

"Shall I not see it to-morrow?" said Nina.

"Do you see that window?" persisted Thomas. "Well, I used to stand there and wait to see you come out of the *Passée* on the bridge; but now you will be in and not out, so I have had a platform made and your chair put up on it, that I may see you from the end of the bridge, when I come home of an evening."

Nina looked at him in wonder, then with a defiant laugh, she asked if he thought she should sit up there to be looked at?

"But when you do sit there I shall see you," he insisted composedly.

He was passing by the door of his own house, when Nina asked impatiently why he did not open it? Thomas muttered something about all the people being out, then taking the key of the house-door out of his pocket, he put it into Nina's hand, saying :

"I have locked your door; open mine, Nina."

Nina smiled almost kindly as she opened the door of the house that was to be hers on the morrow. At once she turned into the parlour. It had all been scoured and scrubbed and beeswaxed, so that it shone

again, and on the platform in the window stood an old arm-chair with a bright new red cushion. Nina, who looked at nothing else, went straight up to it, lightly climbed up the step, sat down in the chair, and thence looked down at Thomas, whose gladness sparkled in his eyes.

"You had that chair put here for me?" she said.

"Yes, Nina, for you!"

"What for?" she asked, as if she had forgotten.

"I have told you—to see you when I come home."

"Can that be true?" she exclaimed almost incredulously.

"Why not, Nina? I never liked anything half so well as to look at you."

Nina bent her dark eyes full upon his face. She found nothing there that belied his words. Neither spoke, but they looked at each other so till Nina turned away, and leaned back in the chair, pale as death.

"You are ill," cried Thomas, startled at a change so sudden.

She replied faintly that she was not ill, but she seemed in a strange sort of trance. Her left arm rested on one of the elbows of the arm-chair, her right hand supported her cheek, her eyes gazed out of the window like the eyes of one in a dream, then suddenly she started to her feet and asked if it were not time to go to the church. Her colour had come back and Nina looked herself again.

Thomas had a clear conscience and led a straight life; the curé had soon dismissed him with a blessing. But what tale had Nina to tell that she was so long about it? Was there some dark secret in her past life, some unsuspected guilt or shame, that the little church had become quite grey when Nina rose at length, and came back to the bench where Thomas sat waiting? There were tears on her pale face, and her look shunned his piercing gaze, and her voice was faint and low as she whispered that she was ready. Thomas asked rather severely if she would not say a prayer first, and Nina, with unusual obedience, knelt down by his side and prayed as he bade her. Indeed, she prayed so long that Thomas had to tell her the sexton was waiting to close the church. They went out together after being reminded, under the porch, by the curé, who was going away too, that he would expect them early; and walking side by side, they went down the hill, passed by the house of Thomas, and crossed the bridge.

The moon was rising as they reached the *Passée*. Her soft, pale light stole in through the trees and fell across the path in broad patches. The evening was mild for the season of the year, but Nina walked very slowly by her lover's side, like one ill at ease; then suddenly she stood still and said she must sit down. There was a low, grassy bank close by. Thomas took her to it, and Nina sank, rather than sat at the root of a tree. He asked if he should bring her some water.

"No," she answered in a weak, low voice; "it will soon be over."

Thomas stood by her side and waited. The spot was lonely, the

night was very still, only now and then could he hear the murmur of the little river gliding by. Suddenly there broke on this stillness a voice of lament that went to his very heart, for Nina was weeping bitterly. Every sob and moan she uttered thrilled him with a secret pain, yet he put no questions. At length she grew calmer, and wondering at his silence.

"You do not ask what ails me," she said; "perhaps you do not care to know, and yet I must tell you, though——"

"Tell me nothing your husband should not hear, Nina," he interrupted sternly. "We are to be married to-morrow morning. I want to know nothing; let bygones be bygones. Such as you are, for better for worse, I take you, but tell me nothing. You have tried me much, I have borne it, but you see you might try me too much."

Nina was silent awhile, then she said very sadly, "I must tell you, though I know that this time you will hate me for it."

"Nina ——"

"I must. It would kill me to keep it back; besides, I should tell it you all the same in the end. You had better know it before I am your wife."

"I suppose I must go through it," muttered Thomas, setting his teeth; "yet I would give something never to know what you have done, Nina."

"I have done nothing," sorrowfully said the girl, "but I have a bad, hard heart, and I have been ill-used, and when the curé once bade me be patient under it, I scorned him and set my face against heaven! and all my misery I laid to your door, and so I thought, as you gave me the opportunity, that I would have my revenge."

"Well," said Thomas.

"I would lead you to our very marriage morning, and when I stood before the maire and the priest, and you had said 'yes' and taken me for your wife, I would say 'no,' and make you as great a byword among your people as you had ever made me."

This was not what Thomas had feared, yet it was a terrible blow. He could not speak at once; at length he said: "You really meant that, Nina?"

"Yes," she answered faintly, "I did. I thought to go away once, but you followed me and brought me back, and so I thought I would show you that you were not my master."

"When you went to the church with me this evening, did you mean it, Nina?"

"Yes, I meant it till——" She paused.

"Till when, Nina?"

"It was in the house that my heart failed me," she said, without answering his question. "When I saw the chair you had put there for me, and I sat in it and looked out at the bridge, and thought how you

had stood and looked out for me, day after day, loving me, though I hated you, and how sure you felt that I would become your wife on the morrow, and had put that chair there to see me as you came home, my heart failed me. My purpose seemed to die away from me; I tried to keep it fast, but I could not. The great love you bore was too much for all my hate and scorn, and so it prevailed over me, and as I sat in the chair, I said to myself, 'I cannot do it—no, I cannot do it!'"

"Is that all, Nina?"

"Almost all. I told the curé all about it, and he bade me repent, and be a good wife to you. He did not bid me tell you this, but it had been too much for me, for as we came up the *Passée*, you walking by my side, suspecting nothing, I felt that I must die unless I told you, and now I have told you, and you can deal with me as you please, and if you like to scorn me to-morrow as I meant to scorn you, why you may, and so you will have your revenge."

She looked up at him in humble penitence. Thomas did not answer her at once; he was gazing down at her as she sat almost at his feet, with her hands clasped round her knees and her pale face, on which the moonlight fell, raised up to his as in the silent expectation of her sentence.

"And so," said Thomas sternly, "when I took you in my arms to-morrow week and kissed you, as an honest man may kiss the girl who is to be his wife—so all the time you meant to betray me with that kiss, as Judas betrayed his master."

Nina started to her feet, and raised her trembling hands to heaven. "As I have a judge there," she said, "I did not mean it then."

"Then what did you mean?" asked Thomas, still sternly angry.

But Nina only flung herself on the earth, weeping aloud in the bitterness of her anguish.

"What did you mean?" he asked, without relenting. "I, like a fool, did think that I read something very like love in those black eyes of yours, as I took you in my arms that evening, but if you had loved me then you could not have planned to betray me the next morning. No, Nina, you could not. True, you have confessed your sin—but that is remorse, no more."

Nina did not answer at once. When she spoke all she said was, "Deal with me as you like. I have deserved no mercy from you. But you told me once that I was no witch; well then, *you* are no sorcerer, *Maitre* Thomas—no, you are not."

Thomas did not seem to understand this taunt, for all he said was, and he spoke rather drily, "Well, will you marry me to-morrow, Nina?"

"Yes," she answered in a low tone, "if you will have me."

"And will you, on leaving the church, go with me to my uncle's?"

"Yes," she answered again, "I will."

"And Nina, you will not work on Sundays now, you know."

"No. I will not."

"And you will say your prayers and go to church and be a good Christian, Nina?"

And Nina, as humble as she had been scornful, still said "Yes." Thomas then drily supposed it was all settled, whereupon Nina rose, and walked on. Thomas walked by her side and uttered never a word, till he handed her the key at the door of her cottage, and said "Good-night." Nina stood with the key in her hand, looking after him.

"Ah, I should not have told you!" she exclaimed, stung at his coldness, "for now you will hate me."

"Do you like me, Nina?" asked Thomas, half turning back.

"You know I do," said poor Nina, "you know I have liked you since you said, 'Will you marry me, Nina?' I have striven hard against it because I have a bad, hard heart, but it has prevailed over me, and you know it."

"You have liked me seven days, Nina. Well, I have liked you seven years. So, perhaps, I am not going to leave off now. And yet you should not have told me! For suppose I were to treat you to-morrow as you meant to treat me! Wickedness often breeds wickedness, Nina! or worse still, suppose I were to marry you and take you to my uncle's, but instead of bringing you home to Manneville, drop you on the road, and cast you away. No law could make me live with you, Nina, and should I not have my revenge then?"

"Ay, indeed," said Nina, faintly.

"Well, let bygones be bygones," resumed Thomas. "Only be early to-morrow, Nina. My uncle lives a good way off."

"I shall be early," she answered, and so they parted. Early though the lovers were the next morning, all Manneville was as early to see them married, and when they left the church man and wife—it was the organist who gave Nina away—all Manneville followed them out. Nina looked modest and lovely, and when Thomas lifted her up into the little car that was waiting for them at the church-gate, and sprang up by her side, he could not help looking both triumphant and happy.

"She has bewitched him," exclaimed Laure, as the car drove off.

The curé overheard the remark and smiled. "No, no, my good Laure," said he; "it is Thomas who has bewitched Nina."

"Well then, does he mean to starve her?" irrelevantly asked Laure, "that he takes her off without giving her a bit of breakfast."

But Thomas had no such intention. As they drove past the little wood on the road to Fontaine, he asked Nina, and it was the first time he had spoken, if she would not get down and have something to eat. She said "yes;" so they alighted, and sitting down under the shade

of the spreading tree, in the spot where he had once found her sleeping, they had their little meal there. The sun was high by this, and the air was warm. Some bees made a drowsy hum in the shady place, the very stamping of Thomas's horse, as he wandered about, grazing and whisking his tail at the flies, was enough to send one to sleep. Nina's nights had been very wakeful ones of late; besides, Thomas said never a word. She closed her weary eyes, she let her head sink on her bosom. In a moment, she scarcely knew how, Nina was fast asleep.

When she woke up a long slanting sunbeam, stealing on the grass by her side, was her only companion. Thomas had vanished, the horse, and car, the very tokens of the recent meal were gone, Nina was quite alone.

Had Thomas fulfilled his half threat? Had he deserted his young wife on her wedding-day, and more than paid her out for all her scorn? Whether such were Nina's thoughts or not she neither called on nor looked for her husband, but she clasped her hands round her knees and looked straight before her with sad, grave eyes. Presently she heard a step behind her, and the voice of Thomas asked cheerily if she had been long awake.

"Not long," quietly answered Nina. Something wrong about the car had obliged Thomas to take it to a farm behind the hill, and get it mended, and now, as time enough had been wasted, they resumed their journey.

What need is there to tell how the uncle of Thomas and the uncle's wife both liked Nina, what a wedding-feast there was, and what merry-making went on till Saturday came round again, and Thomas could take Nina home? As they drove past the wood, Thomas nodded towards it over his shoulder, and said: "Well, Nina, when you woke and found yourself alone there, what did you think?"

"I thought you would come back for me," answered Nina, with a shy smile.

"I was close by all the time, Nina," whispered Thomas, and as he said it the last faint drop of bitterness that might have lingered in his heart died away from it and returned no more. But whether he had bewitched Nina or Nina had bewitched him, is an open question to this day in Manneville.



A DOCTOR'S WAITING-ROOM.

THE larches in the plantation had just begun to hang out their emerald tassels, and the lilacs and hawthorns on the lawn were bursting into their first glory of Spring fragrance, when old Squire Maddon announced his intention of taking his departure, as usual, for London.

And Squire Maddon was one of those who liked his peep of the great city. He was a lonely man now, and had nothing to do but to spend, as best pleased him, the crops of golden guineas that grew in his turnip fields, and were reaped in his yellow acres of corn. Why should he deny himself and hoard his wealth? No son of his would ever carry on the old name, or scatter blessings from the old home. So he went up regularly every Spring and took his part in all that was going on.

As I have said, therefore, it happened one morning that the old Squire announced to his old butler, Cheese, that he intended shortly to leave for London.

Cheese was an old denizen of Maddonley Hall, and, like many old servants, Cheese had strong views of his own on most subjects, and was not shy of expressing the same to his master, even did they not exactly coincide with that gentleman's own expressed sentiments. Whether it happened that Cheese had had an unusually severe twinge of his old enemy, gout, that morning, or whether he too was beginning to find Maddonley dull, and to long for a share in his master's dissipation, I cannot say, but certain it is that Cheese was not in his usually happy frame of mind. He received the announcement without comment, and busied himself about the arrangement of the breakfast-table, flitting round and round the Squire in a manner that particularly fidgetted the poor old gentleman.

"Cheese, I'm going to London on Wednesday," said he again, in a loud voice. "You'll have my things all ready and the carriage round at ten o'clock exactly."

"Very well, sir," was Cheese's reply, and he left the room, seemingly very ill pleased with the announcement.

Three mornings after this, Squire Maddon might have been seen sitting at breakfast in his sister's house in Wilton Place. Miss Maddon was one of those fresh-hearted old ladies that one meets with now and then, who seem to have such an overflowing store of love and sympathy and kindness that one can only solve the mystery of their unappreciated worth and unappreciated loveliness by vague, tender romances of a dead love, never dead to them. She sat at breakfast

now, cheery and bright, keeping her eyes open to see to her brother's comforts, and her mouth open to entertain him with little good-natured scraps of news of old friends. The Squire was amused and excited by the lively prospect from the window, so different from the view from the breakfast-room at home, where nothing living was even to be seen among the trim flower-beds of the old-fashioned garden, except when the stately old peacock came round to beg for his morning's crumbs.

The number of people passing was a new surprise every year he took up his abode at his sister's table, and he always seemed to expect her to know who they all were. So he would keep on asking questions, and getting few answers, but happy little chat in return. Perhaps on the first morning he looked more out of the window than usual, but it was always a favourite amusement of his.

"Who is that, Mary?" he asked, as a very pretty girl came out of the house opposite.

"That?" said Miss Maddon, turning to put up her glasses. "Oh! that's poor little Janey Grimshaw. You remember old Richard Grimshaw, don't you, Tom?"

"Old Dick Grimshaw, dear me, dear me! And that is his daughter, is it?" said the old Squire. "A hard fellow was old Dick, but desperately fond of his little wife, too—dear me! I remember the day I stood best man to him, three-and-twenty years ago. He never had but the one daughter, had he, Mary?"

"Never any child but that, Tom. He loves her very much too, in his way, but he loves his money-bags better. There is the poor young thing pining her roses away for that nice lad Charlie Moore, and the old man has broken it off, for Charlie is only a young doctor you know, and has no fortune to settle on her. It is a pity when folks think money is worth more than love," said the dear old lady, with a sigh.

The old Squire made no reply. But from that morning he watched day by day for Jane Grimshaw, and listened with all the interest aroused in his tender old heart to all his sister's tales of her patient submission to her purse-proud old father, and her promise, dutifully given, and faithfully kept, to see her betrothed no more. They saw her drive out with her father every afternoon with a bright, ever-ready smile for his lightest word, and each day the honest old squire turned away with a muttered malediction on the selfish blindness that could be deceived by such a smile into unbelief of the grief within, which was daily making the sweet, pale face more sweet and more pale to all eyes but his.

One morning he put on his hat and went over to see his old friend Richard Grimshaw. It was odd, his sister thought, that he had not done so before; but the truth was that much as he liked watching the girl from across the street, he almost dreaded to meet her close, so

much did she remind him of another, loved and lost thirty years ago : for the old man's heart was very tender still. However, this morning he knew that Miss Grimshaw was out, so he took his hat and stick and went over to see his old friend. Many an old, old story they recalled as they sat together, of days when those two white heads were brown and curly, and bright life all before them.

"Ah, I am a lonely old man now, Dick," said our old Squire, "but you have got a daughter, and as pretty a lass as ever I saw. She will be leaving you soon some of these days, or else the young fellows are blinder than they used to be."

"Oh, aye, I daresay;" was old Grimshaw's somewhat surly response. "They are not so blind but they know what *money* is, Tom. A set of fortune-seeking, beggarly upstarts!"

"Well, well, Richard, don't be too hard on 'em. There will be some true-hearted fellow asking for her some day for love of herself. And riches are not all, Dick, not all. Love is better than money, Dick; I know that well. Think what my poor father did, God bless him; he repented of it at last, but it was too late—too late; she was wearied away then. Was money worth all that, Richard?"

"Tut, tut, Tom! you're just as great an old fool as you always were. Jane's quite young enough to wait a bit. *My* daughter marry a beggar, indeed! No, no! The right man will come by-and-by, you'll see."

The old Squire shook his head slowly as he rose and took his hat. "The right man is the one that loves her well, Richard, and as long as he has an honest heart and strong arms to keep her from want, don't you mar God's own rules, Dick, by saying them nay."

The old miser stared at him in astonishment. Was it for such an end as this that he had spent his days in heaping up treasure to leave a name behind him? Tom Maddon was a very worthy old fellow, but knew nothing of the world—nothing at all.

A day or two after this, the last day of his intended sojourn in London, as Squire Maddon was passing along Brook Street, he saw on a brass-plate the name of an old schoolfellow, whom he had not seen for many years, but who, he now remembered to have heard, had achieved for himself a name to be listened to with the highest deference among the medical men of the day. A sudden desire came over him to see his old friend again. Would his hair be as thin and white now as his own was? Would he have forgotten now, in the midst of his grandeur and fame, the old school playground and the old boy-friend? So he turned and rang the bell and found himself speedily ushered as an ordinary professional visitor into the great man's waiting-room, where two or three patient groups were assembled before him, waiting for their turn to be ushered into the audience chamber. At first the old Squire was inclined to fret at this treatment. He was not a patient, he wanted to see his friend; but a few moments' reflection made him

resigned to his lot. He had nothing special to do for the next two hours ; he was tired with his walk, and glad to rest, and thirdly, if his ancient companion had become such a great man, why not hear from him, in a friendly way, what could be done for his little infirmities. So he took up the daily newspaper from the table, and ensconced himself in a corner to con its news and watch his companions. The latter apparently proved the most interesting occupation, and the crackling sheets of the "Times" became a mere rampart of defence, from behind which he carried on his observations unnoticed.

Farthest from him, and nearest to the door of admittance to the oracle's presence, sat a young girl of singularly prepossessing appearance, though not actually beautiful. Her eyes were large and very brilliant, and her cheek was tinged with a colour too pure to be natural. Yet she looked less of the invalid than did her husband, a young man of military bearing, whose face, as he turned from the window to watch her, was ashy pale, giving his handsome, well-cut features a look of stony rigidity. She smiled brightly as she caught his eye fixed on her ; a smile which seemed but to close his lips the closer and to bring a deeper shadow over his brow as he marked how the colour flitted evanescently over cheek and forehead. That story was not hard to read, the old man thought. Unrealized danger, and bright hope in the future, which would not only cheat itself, but also reassure all loving anxiety—such he read on the one fair face ; on the other the blank anguish of one who first realizes that his jewels are but *lent* to him, the almost paralyzing sense of nervous fear with which we wait for those few words, dropped so calmly from wise lips, which are to us light or darkness—life or death. Ah ! what sorrow must these four small walls have seen day by day ; how many sad hearts must have silently noted each simple item of its contents, with that singular unconscious minuteness which so often comes to us in moments when our heart is hanging in dread suspense between joy and misery. This was, indeed, the story of two lives—of two immortalities : but they were but two in the thousands of life's dramas.

Nearer to him, in the most comfortable chair the room afforded, with her feet on a footstool, and her eyes on everybody, sat a sharp-faced lady of that unmistakable type which is at once pronounced by every observer to express the genus "old maid." An old lady of worldly wealth evidently, for her attire was costly and gorgeous, though of an antiquated fashion ; but if her face told a true tale our Squire might have cited her to prove the moral to his assertion,—that riches are *not* happiness. Her present cause of discontent (for she looked as if she had many, or at least *thought* she had) was the interminable time that she had been kept waiting already, and how much longer it might be still, she was sure she could not say ! This was said with a spiteful look at the young couple already mentioned, who evidently had

committed the crime of arriving before her, and whose turn was yet to come. All her malicious hints were thrown away, however; they were too much engrossed with each other, these offending young people, to have time to care for the irritable old woman. Just at that moment the doctor's bell rang, and the poor young fellow started at the sound more than he had done, I venture to say, at many a cannon ball. The placid little boy in buttons entered with his invariable smile, and, with a bright look, the young wife followed him from the room. The old lady gave a sigh of injured and enduring patience as she saw her depart, and the old Squire could not but sigh softly, too, for the look of utter wretchedness with which the husband resumed his slow pacing of the room when the door had closed upon her.

Sitting nearest to our old friend was yet another group, whom we have not yet looked at. There was not much to attract notice in them, a plain, simple little woman in widow's weeds, and a pale, thin child, with dark eyes. His little, transparent hands were busily turning over the leaves of a volume of the "*Illustrated London News*," and his thoughts seemed to be given to the pages with an eager delight which told perhaps of the rarity of such pictorial pleasures in a small home, as well as of an intelligence and thought seen only in children whose chief companions are those of years far beyond their own. "The only son of his mother, and she was a widow," was the story this group seemed to tell, and God comfort the poor woman if he *was* her only son, for he did not look as if he would be with her long. The mother's face was very quiet but very sad. She had no heart to be impatient at the delay of her turn, though the old lady who fretted at it so much could pay for many such interviews, and she could but afford the one. She held it there tight in her hand, the little white paper-pocket, the guinea which she knew they should often miss, but which she must spare this once for advice for her boy. It was her last hope. Oh! what would it bring to her?

Thus they sat in this little room, each silent and apart. The door opened, and a new inmate was ushered in. Some one who had come in a carriage, for the old gentleman had heard it roll up to the door, though, having his back to the window, he could not see it. He looked up now, however, as the owner entered the room, and saw—Jane Grimshaw! She did not know him, of course, though he knew her so well; so, with a cursory glance round the room, she seated herself in an arm-chair opposite to him, with her back to the door. What had brought her here? Could her blind old father have had his eyes opened by the Squire's warning, and learned, for the first time, that there was indeed no time to be lost, if he would not see his daughter pass away beyond the question of marrying and giving in marriage? This was something of the truth. He had not allowed himself, indeed, to appear anxious, but had told her that old Dr. Rose was an old friend of his, and that she

might as well look in in the course of the day and tell him that his old schoolfellow had sent her to see whether he could say anything about these headaches. Jane acquiesced listlessly. She knew well enough that no Dr. Rose could stop either headache or heartache; but if it pleased her father it pleased her. It was so seldom he bestowed any apparent thought upon her that she greeted the command as an unusual sign of affection. The old Squire had watched her for two or three minutes, sitting with her eyes fixed on the newspaper he had relinquished, when his attention was again attracted to the opening of the door. This time it was a gentleman who entered, with a deliberate, self-possessed step and manner, which seemed to imply a frequent and intimate acquaintance with the room. He did not look like an invalid, and the Squire was quietly scanning him with a view of determining satisfactorily his business there, when he was arrested by catching sight of the brilliant flush that had overspread the pale cheeks and white brow of Jane Grimshaw. She had caught sight of the new comer in a mirror opposite, and the face bent closer over the columns of the "Times" was one glowing blush. There could be but one solution, the old gentleman thought; this was young Dr. Moore, and here in following her father's express commands was she to meet him face to face whom she had so wearily yet so dutifully shunned these long, long months. The old Squire could not but remark, however, that there was no surprise on the young Medico's face. Was not the well known carriage driving up and down the street, and if it happened that afternoon (as it often did happen) that he had some difficult professional case to claim Dr. Rose's advice on, who will say he should have passed the door *in case* that might be the one house in the street with which the carriage's loitering might be connected? If he *did* find her there, *he* had given no promise of non-intercourse; and so in the young fellow walked, as handsome a lad as might be seen, said Squire Maddon to himself, with a brow that would have scorned deceit, and a mouth and chin that showed no amenity to control,—a lad that would hew out his niche in Fame's temple; either for good or for evil a magnet among his fellows.

Janey's head was bent lower, lower. She dared not look at him, lest she should soil her faith to her father by seeming to invite him to speak to her, were it his intention to avoid a meeting. A rejoicing surprise at such a chance was in her honest heart, a thrilling delight that, without power to prevent it, she *must* meet him this once,—for she did not think he would not see her? He did not leave her long in doubt, at any rate. A rapid glance round at the occupants of the room, and then he stepped to her side with a quiet greeting which raised her eyes to his, and placed her hand in his for an instant. Probably, no one in the room except my old friend, though all indulging the privilege of those already established to inspect each new arrival, guessed that they met as

other than everyday acquaintances. And then Dr. Moore drew in a chair beside hers, and prepared to make the most of the opportunity that had fallen to him. I am afraid I cannot conscientiously say that the old Squire did his best not to listen to their talk. They sat between him and the door; he therefore was the only inmate of the room who could overhear, if he wished, and I am bound, as an honest historian, to say that he did wish it very much! Before, however, he had succeeded in catching anything but the most common-place remarks, uttered by the young doctor in the most common-place tone, his attention was forcibly withdrawn by the voice of the irritable old lady on his other side, pitched in a high key which effectually drowned all ordinary conversation. "What on earth do you expect the doctor to say about that child, ma'am?" she asked, suddenly addressing the little widow. "I shouldn't think he could tell you anything but what everybody can see!"

The poor mother raised her eyes in astonishment at the abrupt rudeness of the address, and then turned them again on her boy's pale face with a look of patient sorrow that would have silenced most questioners on such a subject. The elderly spinster's tact, however, did not seem to be as keen as her temper.

"Why don't you take him to the sea-side?" she said; "in the south somewhere, or over to France for a little; it is the best chance he could have."

The hot blood rushed up into the widow's face, but quickly paled down again. She was not yet accustomed to realize and acknowledge the straits of her poverty. She was spared an answer, however, by the welcome sound of the physician's bell, dismissing his patient. Welcome to those waiting for their turn, but how doubly welcome to the young husband, to whom this interview, which entailed so much for him, had seemed to occupy untold ages. He left the room hastily to join his wife, and, I am sure to the relief of all present, the crabbed old dame was ushered into the sanctum of Dr. Rose. What ingratitude his efforts to make light her imaginary ills would meet with, I can only guess; our business with her ceases when the waiting-room door had closed behind her. The tears still stood in the widow's eyes as the thought, occasioned by that careless question, lingered in her mind. What would she *not* give for the power to try that one happy chance for her boy's life. The old Squire's kindly heart was moved with pity, and with the ready tact of true kindness, he drew the child's wondering eyes from his mother's grief.

"See here, my little man," said he, drawing out his large gold repeater, "here's a wonderful watch, that will tell you the time without ever opening its face."

The boy was soon on his knee, and when the watch had been fully exhausted, the pictures again became a mutual amusement, which

engrossed the old Squire nearly as much as his little companion, so quaint, in their childish wisdom, were the comments they elicited from the boy.

The doctor's bell again ! He had not taken very much time, I fear, to all the old lady's distresses of mind and body ! The widow rose, with a grateful smile and word of thanks to the old gentleman, and, with her boy, left the room. The old Squire coughed and blew his nose, and inwardly vowed that the world was very hard, and wished with all his heart that the poor young thing had been a beggar, that he might have rejoiced her heart with a five-pound note or so.

What had taken place between the young couple during this distraction, I cannot profess to chronicle. The old gentleman is my observer on the present occasion, and he had been engaged in learning that there are deeper sorrows than those that burdened the crooked fate of these two young lovers, who had claimed at first his supreme pity. They did not seem, however, to agree on the subject under discussion, for her voice, when he again caught it, was in a tone of entreaty.

"Charlie, Charlie, don't !" she said. "You don't know what you would tempt me to ; I dare not listen to you if you speak so."

And the young man's answer, I confess, was not generous.

"Janey," he said, "I believe you will ask me next to break our engagement. I daresay there are a dozen of them," he added, bitterly, "with their thousands a year that you could please your father by marrying, to-morrow ; *that* would fulfil your ideas of duty to him, I suppose ?"

Jane Grimshaw's face grew deadly white at his tone, but her answer was very quiet, as she drew off her glove and put her finger on a small turquoise ring.

"Charlie," she said, "you put that on, and no one else shall ever take it off while I am alive. I will wait—wait for years, if I live ;—but I cannot disobey papa's direct command." She moved towards the table as she finished speaking, and took up a book. Dr. Moore turned silently to the window.

The doctor's bell again, and Miss Grimshaw looked up with an involuntary start which seemed to be one of relief. She had forgotten that her turn was not yet, but Squire Maddon did not remind her of it. So when the small boy entered, he kept his seat, and the young lady was conducted from the room. He had now but one companion, and that a very silent one, but the Squire was not a man to be deterred by trifles, and he had made up his mind to make acquaintance with this companion.

"Dr. Moore," said he, and the young man started at being addressed by name ; "I'm tired of waiting for this old Rose to-day, and since you are a doctor, sir, perhaps you will do just as well and save me waiting any longer. Shall I proceed to explain my wishes, sir ?"

"No, sir," said Moore, in surprise. "I never practise in other men's rooms."

"No matter, sir, no matter. Then I'll come to your own. Let me see, to-morrow morning about ten, I suppose? Very good, that will do." And he rose and took his hat as if to go. Then he turned as if with a second thought. "You have no desire to leave London, I suppose? Have established a practice here?"

"No, sir," said the young doctor, rather nettled. "I have not established a practice. I'm only an assistant surgeon, if it is any interest to you."

"Oh, indeed," replied the old man, thoughtfully. "The truth is, sir, we are in great need of an active, clever young fellow down in our place, and I suppose now old Thorn is dead it might be made something like eight hundred a year, what with Union and County Hospital and private practice together—and I should rather like you to be down there in case my gout was to come back next winter—and in fact, I may say you're welcome to it, if you please, sir—quite welcome!"

His hearer was struck dumb at this unexpected address from an odd-looking old gentleman he had never seen before in his life, and before he could gather his scattered senses the Squire had begun again.

"Oh, don't think about the election, sir. I could easily arrange that; in fact—dictate to me, indeed! No, no, they know better than to do that. Indeed I should take it as a personal favour to myself, sir, if you would come and look after my gout. But no hurry, sir, none at all—I'll see you to-morrow morning, sir." And before Moore could open his lips he was gone.


"Who can this eccentric old fellow be?" he asked aloud in astonishment, and I am not sure that the old fellow did not hear the remark as he shut the door, for a faint chuckle was heard by the porter in the hall as he made his way to the front door.

On seeing this porter the Squire roused his powers of interrogation again. "Who was the widow lady who left the house last?" asked he, abstracting a shilling from his pocket.

"Her name was Earl, sir, I believe," replied the polite functionary, as he perceived the silver; "yes, sir, Mrs. Earl, sir, I believe."

The old gentleman nodded and passed forth. He turned his face towards Oxford Street, and in one of the small cross streets he descried the object of his question, with her little boy. Now this old country gentleman's bump of curiosity must have been largely developed, for he at once determined to see where that quiet little lady was going. So he walked deliberately behind her through many streets, and when at last she entered a small lodging in a quiet, narrow street, the old gentleman walked up to the door, and with a smile of gratified pride made a note of the number and the street in his pocket-book, and having done so, he called a hansom and drove home. On his arrival

there, he found he was nearly a whole quarter of an hour late for dinner, —a thing unheard of in all his existence,—a fact that would have convinced old Cheese, had he had the grief to witness it, that his dear master was indeed growing old. He did not seem to mind it much himself though, for he chuckled over his dinner, and smiled over his wine, and laughed aloud over a letter he wrote after dinner, which so excited his good sister's curiosity as to the contents of the epistle (it must have been a family weakness of the Maddons) that she managed to get a peep at the envelope, and found it, to her dismay, addressed to a person she had never even heard of, in some low little street in London. What could have come to Tom! She did not know he knew anybody in London but herself, certainly not any *lady*! Poor Miss Maddon was seriously disturbed, and, indeed, Tom's spirits continued all the evening so high that anyone else would have taken it as a personal affront on the last evening of his stay in their house. She asked where he had been all the afternoon, and was told at Dr. Rose's; but when she brightened up at that and longed to hear what the doctor had said, he told her he had never seen the doctor after all! And then he chuckled again at some thought of his own thereupon, till she felt quite ready to be cross. Neither did he enlighten her on the subject till a long time after, when she first heard that old Richard Grimshaw, stricken with terror at a letter Dr. Rose had written to him about his daughter, had consented to the marriage at last; and that Squire Maddon had procured for Charlie Moore the practice and position left by old Dr. Thorn, who had pocketed the guineas of the county gentlemen round Maddonley for two-and-forty years. And when she ventured then to ask about that mysterious letter, which she owned to having peeped at, she heard about the small, pale boy and his sad-looking mother, who had so stolen the old Squire's heart, and wished she could have seen the arrival of that letter in the little lodging, which had made the widow's heart sing for joy, and had been the means, under God, of saving a tender young life to be the widow's comfort and support.



GARLANDS.

THE use of garlands both at weddings and funerals is of great antiquity. According to Pliny, however, flowers were not used in garlands till about the year 380 B.C. Before this date, they were composed exclusively of branches of trees, or green herbs.

He relates that the painter Pausias being in love with the garland-maker Glycera, first caused flowers to be combined with the green. These two, the one working in the materials nature gave to her hand, the other imitating them on his canvas, vied with each other in the novelty and taste of their designs, and thus introduced the fashion.

Amongst the Greeks, roses, violets, and myrtle, appear to have been the favourite flowers for garlands. The first, sacred to the Graces, as well as to the god of silence, the second believed to have health-restoring powers, and the third dedicated to Venus, whose altar was decorated with wreaths of myrtle.

By the laws of the twelve tables, those were crowned with garlands when dead, who in life had merited the honour. The public games had each a distinctive crown, and not only had the victors their temples wreathed with parsley, fennel, or other herbs, but according to Pliny, a like token of respect was granted to their parents.

Amongst the Romans, the same custom prevailed; and a civic crown of oak leaves was the reward of him who had saved the life of a Roman citizen. A Roman bride wore a chaplet of flowers and herbs upon her head, and a girdle of wool about her waist, and at funeral feasts, the mourners wore garlands while celebrating the virtues and achievements of the dead.

When paganism retired before the advance of Christianity, all ancient customs were not abolished; and the beautiful and significant use of herbs and flowers at weddings and funerals was still retained. In Cole's "Art of Simpling" he thus speaks of garlands formed of the cypress, rosemary, and bay. "They are all plants which fade not a good while after they are gathered and used—as I conceive—to intimate unto us, that the remembrance of the present solemnity might not die presently, but be kept in mind for many years." Flowers, on the contrary, were used as emblematic of the shortness of life.

Amongst the Anglo-Saxons, flowers appeared both at their bridal and burial feasts. After the "benedictial ceremony," as Strutt calls it, the bride and bridegroom were crowned. But as these garlands were kept in the church on purpose, they must of course have been composed of artificial flowers.

That bridal chaplets continued to be worn, contemporary writers bear witness. Chaucer takes care not to omit the garland in describing

Griselde adorned for her marriage. In the 15th century brides wore garlands either of flowers, or corn-ears.

The poets and authors of the 16th and 17th centuries abound with references to plants and flowers as used both in bridal and funeral ceremonies. At this period trees, herbs, and flowers had a clearly defined significance. Cypress and yew were emblematic of death and immortality; rue was the "herb o' grace;" rosemary was for remembrance, and is mentioned by several old herbalists as good for strengthening the memory. Violets symbolized fidelity, the columbine desertion, and the willow has been from time immemorial the tree of mourning, especially devoted to forsaken lovers. These sweet old superstitions have disappeared before the light of reason. We no longer believe in the signatures of plants and their consequent efficacy, but the familiar flowers of our poets still speak to us in a language we feel, while the grander exotics are dumb.

Strutt gives a detailed description of a wedding procession in the time of Queen Elizabeth. The author is speaking of the marriage of his hero. "The bride being attired in a gown of sheep's russet, and a kirtle of fine worsted, her head attired with a billiment of gold, and her hair as yellow as gold hanging down behind her, which was curiously combed and pleated, according to the manner of those days; she was led to church between two sweet boys, with bride laces, and rosemary tied about their silken sleeves. Then was there a fair bride cup, of silver gilt, carried before her, wherein was a goodly branch of rosemary gilded very fair, and hung about with silken ribbons of all colours; next there was a noise of musicians, that played all the way before her.—After her, came the chiefest maidens of the country, some bearing bride-cakes, and some garlands made of wheat finely gilded, and so passed to the church; and the bridegroom finely apparelled, with the young men followed close behind." By this it would seem that the emblematic garlands were carried by the bridesmaids, and that the bride wore instead an ornament of gold.

At the end of the 17th or beginning of the 18th century, garlands were still borne at funerals, though they were then mostly composed of artificial flowers, with a mixture of gold and silver tinsel, silk, dyed horn, and other tawdry additions. In the centre of these crowns or garlands hung a piece of white paper shaped in the form of a glove, on which the name and age of the deceased was inscribed.

In Yorkshire, and other parts of England, the custom of hanging up garlands of cut white paper over the seat that a "virgin dead" had once occupied in church, prevailed to a late date. At the present time in various parts of Germany and northern Europe, a maiden when laid in her coffin, is crowned with a myrtle wreath. In the South also the bodies of young girls and children are crowned, but generally with artificial flowers, too often of a tawdry kind.

The wreaths of immortelles on the tombs abroad, particularly in France, are familiar to everyone. It is a touching spectacle to see whole families loaded with flowers and garlands, trooping to the cemeteries on All Soul's Day, to deposit their tribute of love at the graves of the departed. In Père-la-Chaise, the tomb of Abelard and Heloise used to be pointed out, the effigies almost concealed by wreaths of immortelles placed there by "*les amoureux infortunés*," it was said.

To revert to the brighter side of the subject. Garlands have continued to constitute an essential part of bridal array, in all countries, though the flowers selected for this purpose vary. In Normandy roses find favour. When a man has little or no dowry to give his daughter, it is a saying there, that he will give her a chaplet of roses.

In Italy the jasmine is the flower selected. In Germany, the myrtle wreath prevails, as in the classic days of Greece and Rome. It is a frequent practice for a young girl to plant a myrtle, and to watch and tend it, till the time arrives when she requires its delicate blossoms for a bridal wreath. Should she die unmarried, the same myrtle tree furnishes her "*Todtenkranz*." It is considered extremely unlucky to present another with myrtle from a plant dedicated to one alone, either for life or death. The myrtle crown of the bride is frequently alluded to by German poets.

In the northern provinces of Germany, and in Scandinavia, the bridal crowns are composed of artificial myrtle, ornamented in a manner more showy than tasteful with additional flowers in gold and silver. These crowns are often a foot or more in height. In the evening the garlands are "*abgetantz*," danced off. A lively tune strikes up, and the bridesmaids and other girls dance round the bride, who is blindfolded. Suddenly the music stops, when the bride places her crown on the head of the girl who happens to stand before her at the moment. Of course the maiden thus crowned will be the next to be married.

These bridal wreaths are kept as cherished mementoes; often under glass. Should a silver wedding-day arrive, after twenty-five years of married life, a silver wreath is worn. Should the venerable couple survive to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary, the matron is crowned with a golden garland.

German ladies of high rank have now, however, like the English, almost universally adopted the wreath of orange blossoms. The first idea of wearing this flower in bridal garlands seems to have been derived from the Saracens, amongst whom the orange branch, from the circumstance of its bearing fruit and flowers at the same time, was considered an emblem of prosperity. By the Saracens not only the orange itself, but its symbolic meaning was introduced into Spain, and thence into France. Thus the fashion of wearing the blossom travelled northwards to England.

None of our older poets allude to the orange blossom; it is probable,

therefore, that it is of comparatively modern use as a bridal adornment. It has been suggested that the fashion was introduced into England by Henrietta Maria, queen of Charles I., but this seems to be mere conjecture.

Thus, in all times and places, have flower garlands been associated with the happiest and most mournful epochs. Lovely emblems whispering to us of faith and remembrance, of mortal joys, and immortal hopes. As Longfellow tells us :—

“ In all places, then, and in all seasons,
Flowers expand their light and soul-like wings,
Teaching us by most persuasive reasons,
How akin they are to human things.
And with child-like credulous affection,
We behold their tender buds expand ;
Emblems of our own great resurrection,
Emblems of the bright and better land.”



WITH THE STREAM.

DRIFTING along the river, all gleaming
With sun-jewels, that sparkled and played on its breast,
Down through the golden-cupped lilies, and dreaming
Of love, as they floated on into the West.

On past the banks, where the tall grasses, waving,
Kissed the cool stream as they bended them low ;
No sound to be heard in the deep stillness, saving
The water's monotonous, musical flow.

Past where the swan 'mid the sedges was sleeping,
Her head 'neath her feathers unruffled and white,
And where through the brushwood the rabbit was peeping,
As if to make sure there was no one in sight.

Past where the deep blue forget-me-nots flooded
The space where they bloomed with a heavenly glow,
Where daffodils stooped from the banks which they studded,
Reflecting themselves in the water below.

Unconscious the two in the boat as it drifted
Of everything round them, and silent was each ;
For the youth as he gazed in the sweet eyes uplifted
Discoursed in a language unfettered by speech.

M. L. E.

A TALE OF OTHER SHORES.

THE inhabitants of those two primeval islands off Cape Cod are as contented as Greenlanders, and think their own region the most beautiful the sun shines on.

At the south-eastern extremity of the outermost of these islands, is the little village or fishing hamlet of Sconsett : its cottages being built on the very brink of the high sand-bank, at whose base the beach lies and the surf roars. The quiet people dwelling there are always busy with their nets and their boats. Twice a year comes the fishing season. Every day then the men go out to their business on the great deep, and when the sun sets come in again with their freight of fish, their wives meeting them on the sands to help unload the cargo, sole foundation of their scanty fortunes. It is a pretty sight, for the women are comely and smiling. Not one in twenty of these women has ever left the island : its few square miles form the limit of their geography : even to go to the other end of the island, seven miles, to the place called "Town," is a pilgrimage. Town was a fine large city in their eyes, with its wharves and its shipping and its beautiful bay ; and its grand hotel that had its sea-bathing visitors in the autumn. The great world beyond the seas is as a myth to them : their chief idea, connected with it, is that it buys codfish. Sometimes one of their youths, more adventurous than his comrades, goes off to explore that unknown world ; and there are aching hearts in the hamlet then when the winds are high at night.

Captain Folyer's house was next the sea, just far enough from the bank's edge for a footpath to wind along between. And Love Folyer, from her little bedroom window, looked out at sky and ocean every day, both boundless to her, but so familiar that she seldom thought about them. The shore had been her play-ground when her little foot-tracks only measured four inches in the sand ; her dolls had lived magnificently in the useless boats drawn up beyond the tide's reach ; she had played at hide-and-seek amid the old black pieces of wreck a rod away ; and the other girls had gathered baskets of white and yellow moss all along the beach, as the waves cast it up—gathered it to sell to the stranger ladies who sojourned sometimes at Town, and came riding over to see the reefs and breakers. These ladies had fair, delicate faces, their hands were soft and white, and sparkling with wonderful rings, as they turned over Love's store of mosses. And their voices were sweetly imperious, like bells, when they spoke to Love—so different from the rough, slow, kindly voices she was used to hear. After such visits, Love would comb out her dark hair before her looking-glass, and wonder what made the ladies so unlike herself.

Love, whose quaint, old-fashioned name was inherited from her great-grandmother, was herself a quaint little beauty, with her beautiful black hair, her low brow, red, pouting lips, and great, gipsy eyes. She was lithe and elegant, fisherman's daughter though she was : but the Folyers were superior to the rest of the islanders. Love had a lover in Reuben Caldecot : but they had been friends so long that it would have puzzled Love to tell when the courtship began. Reuben was the best looking young fellow on the island : tall, broad-shouldered, with kindly blue eyes and golden hair. The sun had burnt his face brown, but it had made the hair only a richer gold. He lived in the house across there, and everybody liked him. Love liked him also in her way, for she was intensely vain and fond of admiration. All he thought of in the world was to make a home for Love ; and he used to dream of seeing his bright-eyed darling come down on the beach to meet his boat as other wives came. As to Love, she cared very much for making herself look pretty, and was often at her looking-glass : by-and-by she would sit at her window ready against Reuben came by—for the young fellow had a fashion of wandering pretty often along that winding path at the top of the bank.

One day she heard his whistle in the distance—he could whistle beautifully, just like any bird he chose to mock. But Love's hair was in a tangle just then, and she not in a good temper. So she made no manner of haste whatever ; but braided on at her hair ; and tried to coil the braids up over her forehead, as she saw, it in the queer old picture of her handsome great-grandmother, who was Love Folyer so many years ago. So when Reuben walked slowly by, there was no glowing face at the window, only the straight white curtain flapping restlessly in the sea-air. He was disappointed, but whistled cheerily, and betook himself to mending his father's boat, which lay drawn up and overturned in the boat-house. An hour afterwards, when he was coming up again, Miss Love condescended to be at the window.

"Good morning, Love."

"It is not morning ; it is noon, almost dinner-time," retorted Love, still in her temper. "What makes you whistle perpetually—like a canary ? I hate canaries."

"I thought you liked canaries," said Reuben, wonderingly.

"I tell you I hate them. That canary of ours bit my finger to-day."

The canary had been a present from Reuben. He took the little fingers that rested on the window-sill into his own.

"I am so sorry, Love. I—I came to tell you something this morning."

"What is it ?" she asked, forgetting her vexation in her curiosity.

"I am going away, Love—going away for a long time," he said, sadly.

"Going away !" involuntarily repeated Love.

"It is such slow work getting on here," said the young man, his heart seeming to be in his mouth. "And you know, Love, I want to do better for your sake. Captain Baxter came over from Town last night, and had a long talk with my father and me. He has offered me a good berth in his ship; and I can earn as much with him in one year as I can here in four years. It will be a two years' voyage, and, Love, when I come back, I shall have enough to go into housekeeping; and you know what that means."

"I always said I never would marry a man that went on those voyages," she answered, proudly and resentfully.

"But, Love, it is only for once. I may never go again. All I want is to get enough to build our house, and then I shall be contented to stay here always, darling."

Love's eyes shot forth an angry sparkle, and then she burst into tears. "You want to go and leave me—I don't care!" was all she could say, convulsively sobbing.

Reuben bent fondly over the bowed head, and stroked the braids of hair caressingly. He could not bear the thought of leaving her: his heart was tried far more than hers.

"Dear Love, be a brave girl," he said. "In two years I shall come back and put a wedding-ring on your finger; and you know I could not do that for five or six years to come if I stay at home. Only two years, dear Love, and then I never will leave you again."

Love's sobs grew less. It soothed her to feel the strong, loving hand on her forehead, and by-and-by she lifted her wet eyes.

"Reuben, I shall be frightened all the time. You may be lost in a storm; or entrapped by savages!"

"Nonsense, Love," he said, laughing then—"neither storm nor savages will hurt me, I hope—and they shall certainly not keep me away when the two years are up. Keep a stout heart, darling, and maybe I will bring you a present from over the seas."

So he coaxed a smile back on Love's red lips: but it fled away trembling the next minute, when he told her the ship would sail in ten days more. That made it seem too real; she could have borne it, she thought, if there had been six months to intervene first.

"Don't go, Reuben!" she exclaimed wildly, starting up as in a sudden attack of fear. "It seems to me that something dreadful will happen. Perhaps I shall never see you again! *Don't go.*"

Reuben moved uneasily. He could not bear Love's tears; and his own heart was breaking at the thought of the voyage. But he had reasoned it all out the night before; he, and his father, and Captain Baxter. Yes, he must go: he must see the wide world a little, earn a great deal of money, and come home in two years to marry Love. It was better than waiting six years. He must go.

Once more he set himself to convince and soothe her: and by-and-

by, Love, feeling as though she had suddenly grown older, said she would try to be happy, and would surely be true to him until he came home again.

The ten days flew very quickly. Old Mrs. Caldecot sewed long hours every day to get her boy ready, and Love would go over in the afternoons to help; and then together they packed the great blue chest, putting in all the little trifles that Reuben would like. Love hid a lock of her black hair in one corner, to surprise him when he found it sometime, and she dropped a good many tears in there, also; which he would not find: but, nevertheless, they were so many little amulets of love.

The morning of departure came at last. Reuben said good-bye to the neighbours and said it to Love. She strove to be brave: but in her eyes there lay a look of some far-off terror, which haunted Reuben many a night afterwards when keeping his watch on deck.

"Bear up to the end, my darling," he whispered. "Some fine day you will see our good ship come sailing round the Point—and you know she is to bring you something beautiful from over the seas."

He sprang into the spring waggon, where his father and the sea-chest already waited for him; to be driven over the barren land to Town, where the "Star of the Seas" lay at anchor.

The next day Love sat at her window with the great glass, looking out for the "Star of the Seas." Yes, there she came, the fine outward-bound ship, with her white sails, rounding the Point. Reuben was at the mainmast; she felt sure it was he. Who else would wave a white handkerchief to her? Love waved hers back again till the good ship was out of sight and only the infinite ocean lay before her eyes. Then she turned wearily from the window with some heavy sighs. Her two years of waiting had begun.

They do not have pic-nics on this island of Nantucket, but they have something that answers to it. Gala days when youths and maidens go dressed in their best to dig "clams" out of the wet sand. It is great fun. Nimble fingers dig out the clams, bake them at an impromptu fire, and eat them. The sport does not end with daylight: some hospitable roof receives the party and they sing and dance far on into the night.

Love stood in her room getting ready for one of these parties. At first, after Reuben's departure she had determined not to go out at all; and she would sit looking forth on the endless sea and wonder when "her ship would come in." But as the time wore on, she fell into old ways again; and her father and mother encouraged her to do so: "moping," they said, was not good for a young girl.

She stood before that little looking-glass of hers weaving her beautiful hair into an elaborate coronal. It became her well. Few persons

but would have given to Love a second look. She had learnt to do her hair exactly as her beautiful ancestor the old Love Folyer used to do hers in the portrait—and well indeed did it become this second Love.

She arrayed herself in her prettiest gingham dress—a shade of delicate buff: no material that did not wash would have done for these gatherings on the sands. But somehow Love, wear what she would, looked like a lady. That old Love Folyer, who had lived at the Town, had a young sailor husband. He sailed away in his ship one day, and his wife waited and watched for him in vain. The storms were terrible that year, and the ship never came home again, nor any of its crew. Poor Love Folyer, a hundred years ago, knew that her sailor's voyage was over, and that it was he who waited for her on an unknown shore, till she ended her own voyage, called life.

Little Love Folyer of to-day, with a grave look on her young face, let these thoughts haunt her, though she did not love them. She was so full of life, she could not bear a hint of dying; and she always thought it was too bad of Reuben to go off amid storms and leave her to fears and sadness. A touch of girl nature banished the sadness: she smiled at herself in the glass and thought how pretty she was!—how becomingly arrayed. She wore her real garnet brooch to-day; and put her mother's string of beautiful gold beads round her neck.

It was a lovely day; the wind, blowing up from the sea, was like wine to the spirits. Love was not quite so wild as the other lasses, but she forgot all care. And when evening came, and they all adjourned to the friendly barn, decorated and adorned for them, Love was just as dainty and pretty as in the earlier afternoon when she had stood before her looking-glass.

Meanwhile reports of this free, fresh party on the sands had been carried to Town; and some of the idle visitors, sojourning at the large sea-side hotel there, thought it would be good to go over and see the fun. Dinner at an end they ordered carriages and went—but the young people were in the barn then—and they entered it also. After a moment's stillness from surprise at seeing so large an influx of fashionable people, the young men and women resumed their dancing, while the strangers found seats in a corner of the barn. Love, who was not dancing, stood a little apart, mutely admiring the bright silks and shawls, the gleam of jewels, and the banded hair of the beautiful, haughty ladies. Love had a taste, not altogether latent, for the luxurious in apparel.

The dance ended, and a few minutes' respite taken, the old fiddler struck up the bars of a Scotch reel.

"I shall have a dance," quoth a gentleman of the new party, speaking to a scornful girl who sat by him.

"With whom?" she asked. "I don't intend to do anything of the kind."

"I didn't ask you!" he said, saucily. "I'm going to get that pretty gipsy over there for a partner."

The lady raised her glass to her eye, and looked at Love.

"She is pretty," she said, meditatively. "What a quaint little thing she looks, though, with her hair braided up in that manner. She makes me think of some old pictures."

"What are you about to do, Reginald?" demanded a stately lady, as he rose from his seat on the bench.

"I'm going to dance," he answered: "and to ask that pretty gipsy girl yonder to be my partner."

"Enquire what her name is, will you?"

He sauntered over to where Love stood, somewhat wondering at the mandate.

"I am a stranger to you," he began, addressing Love; "and possibly you and your friends may think our intrusion here unwarrantable, but I want to dance. Won't you be my partner?"

She looked up into the wilful, merry eyes, and was too much abashed to stand very much on ceremony.

"I don't know but I will," she said, shyly, with a touch of the island dialect. And the gentleman led her to the top of the room quite ceremoniously, and took his place beside her.

Love Folyer thought she must be dreaming. Had a king come to be her partner? He was so handsome, so graceful, and danced so beautifully, this gentleman, that she was almost afraid to take a step with him; but when it was her turn to begin, he smiled joyously at her, and held out his hand, so that she forgot her embarrassment, and never danced better in her life. The other girls were a little envious, perhaps, of her partner, and their meaning glances did not lessen the pink in her cheeks.

When the reel ended with a wild rush "up and down the middle," the gentleman took Love with a final whirl away from the rest, and began talking to her, laughing pleasantly at her pretty breathlessness.

"Now that we have danced together, I am going to tell you my name," he lightly said; "so we must be friends, and you will tell me yours. Is it Zitella?—or Sybil?"

"My name is Love," she said, simply.

"Love? Love?" he returned, his eyes twinkling with merriment. "I can well believe it! But, my love, what is the rest of your name?"

"Love Folyer."

"And mine is Reginald Damer. Do you know that you are just like a gipsy?"

"I don't know what you mean," replied Love, not choosing to be likened to a gipsy—whatever that might be.

"Ah well, never mind!" he exclaimed, pleasantly. "Let us walk about the hall a little—since hall it is by courtesy."

As they passed the group of strangers, he stopped ; and poor timid Love, all unawares, found herself being introduced to the stateliest lady of all.

"I have obeyed your directions, Madam," said Mr. Damer, making sport in truth of the whole thing. "Permit me to introduce to you Miss Love Folyer."

"You have exceeded my directions," said the lady ; "but never mind. Are you Love Folyer, my child ?" she asked, with a shade of change in her voice.

"Yes, ma'am," said Love, timidly, half startled, half pleased at this unexpected adventure.

"Tell me, my dear, what your father's Christian name is," the lady asked again.

"Beriah," said Love, wonderingly. "He is called Captain Folyer."

"Where did you learn to dress your hair in that peculiar manner ?" proceeded the questioner, the rings on her fingers flashing as she gently touched the coronal of hair that was indeed remarkable.

Love blushed vividly. "It is done like the hair in a picture that we have at home," she shyly answered.

"What picture ?" the lady demanded, eagerly. "Whose picture ?"

"It is the picture of my great-grandmother, Love Folyer. I was named after her."

Reginald Damer laughed at the "great-grandmother," and Love looked hurt. But the lady, cold and stately no longer, but eager and glowing, drew Love closer, and tapped her cheeks fondly with those slender, jewelled fingers.

"Dear Love," she said, "it is very, very strange, but I do believe you are my niece : though I daresay you never heard of me. Did you hear that you had an Aunt Ruth ?"

"No, never," replied Love, with wide-open eyes of amazement.

"Ah, well, ask your father about it when you get home, and see what he will tell you. Say to him that you saw your Aunt Ruth, and that she kissed you—*so*, child !" and the lady raised Love's face, and kissed the red young lips.

Not another word. The strangers were preparing to go, and this stately lady drew her soft bright shawl about her shoulders and crossed the room with them. Mr. Damer touched Love's hand and gave her a friendly good-night in his pleasant voice, that always was pleasant in its tones like sweet bell-chimes.

Love stood in a dream. It could not seem real that such things had happened—such words been spoken. She looked around ; there were the cobwebbed rafters of the gray old barn above her, and the girls and lads dancing still, some having thrown themselves down exhausted. No halo, no brightness was left ; she felt like Cinderella when her chariot turned into a pumpkin, and her footmen to mice.

At length the pleasure was over. And the weary lads and lasses, with the one or two old people who had been with them, got into the waiting vehicles and drove away to their secluded homes.

"Did I ever have an Aunt Ruth, father?"

Captain Folyer, disentangling lines and fish-hooks, started at the question. It was the day following the party. The Folyers were seated indoors, Love and her mother sewing. The old couple looked at one another in perplexity.

"Some neighbour must have been talking to her, Beriah," cried Mrs. Folyer.

Beriah shook his head. "No one here knew Ruth," he said. "The people at Town may some of them remember her as they remember the dead; but no one here. What made you ask me that, Love?"

Love explained. Some great people had come over from the Town last evening where they were, and one of the ladies had kissed her and said she thought she must be her Aunt Ruth, but Love had answered that she never knew she had an Aunt Ruth.

"Did you tell her that, Love?" cried Beriah, eagerly: "I'm glad you told her that. She'll know that we don't forgive her; she was a cruel woman."

"Hush," said Mrs. Folyer; "it is God who judges."

"Don't stand up for Ruth, wife," was the stern answer. "What good has she ever done to you?"

Captain Folyer told the story to Love. They lived in the Town then; they were well to do: his father married a second wife, and then a pretty little dark-eyed girl was born, who was named Ruth. She grew up the prettiest girl in Town, but she grew up to ingratitude. One of the grand visitors at the Town, a fine, reckless gentleman, wanted to court her; the old father would not hear of it; he had his reasons; and forbade his daughter to see this Mr. Damer. Ruth threw father, friends, all to the wind, abandoning them as though they were nothing to her, and went away and was married to Mr. Damer. The shock broke the old man's heart; he died of it; and Beriah, the indignant brother, flung off Ruth and her remembrance, never afterwards mentioning her name.

"Did you never see her?—never hear from her, father?" asked Love as he ended his history.

"I never saw her and never heard from her. A friend of ours went to a place a hundred miles away, and when he came back he told a tale of having seen Ruth in a splendid carriage. I stopped him; I would not hear it. No, she never wrote to any of us."

"Well, then, father, it was my Aunt Ruth I met last night, the beautiful, proud lady who kissed me," said Love. "I love her already."

"Love her!" exclaimed Beriah. "She is no better than a murderer! She killed thy grandfather, Love! Don't *you* go and do like her, my child. It would break my heart!"

Love did not mean to break anyone's heart: but youth is selfish sometimes, and gives wounds, without knowing it, to those who are older and sadder. All through her father's story Love was thinking how beautiful the lady looked, this new Aunt Ruth, with her pale, proud face, and how white her jewelled fingers were. Love blushed to think how awkward she herself must have seemed beside her—and with that gingham dress on!

A few days passed. Love's thoughts were ever dwelling on that strange meeting, and unconsciously longing for it to be renewed. She sat at the window of her own little room, where the cool sea-breeze could blow upon her, and rested her flushed cheek on the sill, while she looked down along the white beach, and out on the deep. She was getting used to Reuben's absence now, and no longer feared for him: the days went by so smoothly, nothing dreadful happened at home, and it was hard to realize that anything dreadful might be happening on the far seas. Some day, proudly sailing over them, her "ship would come in," bringing Reuben, and his present from foreign lands. Suddenly, as she sat there this morning, she heard a merry whistle sounding from the path. That was the way Reuben used to come—and with just such a whistle! Love did not look or stir, but she was startled. In an instant more, she saw Rex Damer in sporting costume, with dog and gun. He had been shooting birds.

He halted at the window, and held out his hand. Love, quite bewildered and confused, listened to the explanation of his appearance, and never knew what she answered. The gun was not loaded now, he told her, and lodged it muzzle downwards. His dog, Gyp, barked at Love, no doubt making her acquaintance.

"What makes your sea here all manner of colours?" he questioned. "I thought an orthodox sea was either green or blue: but the waves here are dashing up of a fine brown with white circlets: and over there it's purple, and there it's crimson, and there it's like a rainbow!"

"It's always so," said Love, smiling, "but I don't know why."

"Will you come out and walk with me a little?" he asked, holding out his hand to help her from the low window. But Love held back; she was shy: though it was very nice to have him stand there and talk to her.

"Won't you? Well, it's all right, I suppose—and perhaps your people will be calling for you. Do you know who is in the sitting-room?"

Love's heart beat—she guessed at once. And at that moment the low, sweet, high-bred tones of Mrs. Damer might be distinguished in the silence.

"It is your mother, Mr. Damer," she said, falteringly, not presuming to say to him, "My Aunt Ruth."

Mr. Damer laughed. "Not my mother, Love, my aunt. Mrs. Damer never had any children; she and her husband adopted me: he was my father's brother. I won't tell you what she has come here for to-day," he continued, lightly, turning away with his dog and gun. "But—if you ever come to see us, Love, will you bring me a shell to remember your sea by?"

"Yes," said Love, laughing a little, "*if ever I do.*"

And away he went, and in a few minutes more was wading through the low sand marshes again, up to his knees in the beach-grass, intent on a flight of birds, and quite forgetting Love, who nevertheless did not forget him.

When she was called into the sitting-room, traces of agitation were on the faces of her father, mother, and Mrs. Damer. They were friends now, that was evident, for Mrs. Damer had made good her pleas for the past. She had come over to beg for one thing—that they would spare Love to her for a time. She would give her advantages and be unto her as a fond mother.

"I want to take you home with me, my dear Love, where you shall be as my own child. You are too bright, too beautiful to be buried here. What say you, my little one?"

Love stood speechless, her fingers playing nervously with the edge of her pretty apron. A sudden vision flashed before her of white hands and rings, bright shawls, proud ladies, and gentlemen like Reginald Damer. A sigh from her father broke the charm. She saw how frail he was, how thin and grey his hair looked; he was broken down by toil, and there was something touching in the very querulousness of his mouth. She looked at her mother with her faded, anxious blue eyes; she noticed how rough and stained those unselfish hands were, while Aunt Ruth's were white as milk. What could Love do? A tender impulse made her cross over to the side of the room where her parents sat.

"Understand me, Love," said Aunt Ruth, "this arrangement is to last only as long as you choose that it should. The pleasure of having you will be very great, for I never had a daughter of my own to love; but in urging this on your parents, it is your own advantage that I chiefly think of. It is indeed, Beriah"—turning to him.

The old sailor nodded. The past love for his little Ruth was coming up again.

"You may come back here when you wish, Love, to visit or to stay," added Mrs. Damer. "Only I should like, my pretty one, to give you a peep at the great world. Here you are like a little bird in a cage."

The words took hold of Love. Come back when she pleased: why then should anybody hesitate. She was a simple girl, with all a girl's

hopes and vanities, and the temptation was sore. The world lay bright before her ; she wanted to meet it.

"Father, mother," she said, timidly, "are you willing for me to go?"

"Take your choice, child," said Beriah ; and he could not help his voice being a little stern.

"Just for a little while, Beriah," said the beautiful aunt, pleadingly.

"Just for a little while, father," repeated Love. "I will surely come back. Please let me go, father!"

Beriah rose up. "Ruth, you have conquered," he said ; "you would ever have it as you wished. May the Lord deal so with you as you deal with our lamb ! She may go ; but if she stays away it will break my heart !"

"I will not stay away, father," said Love, firmly ; "how could you think I should ? I should like to go for a little while—just for a little while."

So Mrs. Damer gained her victory, and went her way. It was arranged that in a week's time she should come for Love. And Love ? She was dazzled and half frightened by the new prospects, but in her heart she felt a secret delight. She wanted the day to come ; she grew impatient at the yellow-washed cottage and its unpretending interior. She grew impatient at the little village whose lanes were grass-covered, almost impatient with Reuben's mother, Mrs. Caldecot, who shook her head at the promised visit.

But she did not forget to seek out a beautiful white shell for Reginald Damer. The "if ever" had come to pass.

It was many months after. Miss Folyer stood in her dressing-room, making herself radiant for one of Mrs. Damer's "at homes." She had sailed away with the Damers from Town and then come on by rail, and entered with them into possession of their luxurious home in the gay and crowded city.

A dark-eyed, imperious little beauty was Love, whom men delighted to honour. Her lips had not forgotten their smiles nor their pouts ; her cheeks had not lost their rosiness or their dimples ; her little hands were very white, with rings sparkling on them ; and her black hair was not braided high above her head like her great-grandmother Love Folyer's, but put back in a mass of tiny waves, and pierced by a golden arrow. She wore no more gingham dresses, but silks and muslins and rich lace.

Ah ! Love—Love Folyer—what has become of your better nature ?—your allegiance to home, parents, and lover ? Far, far away on a bleak, lone island were two waiting, their hearts sick with hope deferred. And over the ocean, homeward bound, your lover's ship was coming in !

She looked into the mirror, with the flashing lights on either side, and smiled, well pleased, at her own beautiful face. She had not known she could be so lovely; all she used to dream of had come to her—white hands, jewelled rings, a proud, sweet face, and silk attire! With all that beauty to think of she could not spare many thoughts for island home or ocean, though the wind howled dismally that night, and a ship letter lay unread on her table.

Love had been an apt pupil, catching up instinctively the ways and words of the new world as though born to it. Her tones and dialect had always been good, so that great stumbling-block in the way of such a change did not in her case exist. Her father and mother, cultivated themselves, had trained her: and at the end of a very few weeks' residence with Mrs. Damer, Love could hold her own with anybody. She was a lady by nature as well as in looks.

Passing out of her dressing-room she went downstairs and found the rooms as yet empty. Taking up her place on a sofa in a little draperied recess, there she waited. Presently Mrs. Damer and Reginald came in; they appeared to be talking confidentially and did not see her. Love was about to go forward when some words arrested her.

"Reginald, I will not have it so," said Mrs. Damer. "You shall not win Love's heart unless you care for her. Do you care for her?"

"Auntie, what a question!" he exclaimed, laughingly, "did you ever know me care for anyone? The little Love and I are dear friends, that's all; and we know she has a sailor lover to dream of."

Did the third heart in that room stop its beating to listen to that answer? At least, Mr. Damer did not know it.

Mrs. Damer seemed not to be quite satisfied. "Shall you never marry, Reginald?"

"Ah, that's a question," he answered, laughing.

"It is almost getting time you thought of it. Love ——"

"My dear aunt, we will put Love's name out of this," he interrupted. "She is exceedingly nice now, and all that; but I must have a more cultivated wife—and one of these days I shall no doubt be choosing one. Love is (in a sort) my cousin; she will never be anything more to me."

"Then all I have to say is this, Reginald—do not flirt with her so much. I will not allow it; do you understand? Her heart shall not be played with."

Reginald Damer laughed his light, careless, pleasant laugh; and stood forward to receive the first of the guests who were then entering.

Later in the evening, having finished a polka with a languid beauty, Reginald bethought himself of somebody more charming, and after some search, found Love in the curtained recess looking out at the

cloudy night. His dancing blue eyes were bent full upon her face, and his voice, which had always the ring of joy-bells, exclaimed—"My Love, why have you hidden yourself? Come, just one little dance with me, Queenie!" And he held out both his hands.

Love looked up at him with white face and wild, black eyes; then, without a word, sped away through the guests, and up into her own room.

"Whew!—lightning!" said Reginald to himself, quite interested in this novel proceeding. When had Love ever done such a thing before?

Once in her own room, Love bolted the door, and gave way to a passion of tears. Poor, silly child! she had allowed her foolish head to be turned by Mr. Reginald and his charming speeches more than she knew. The luxury of her new life was potent enough by itself; but he had added a charm and brilliancy which had perfectly fascinated her, and made her forget what after all lay deepest and dearest in her heart. For Love was not utterly spoiled, and almost every one of us requires some sad experience to set life straight. She had been startled out of the spell in an instant of time, and now she cowered in her room full of terror and remorse. By-and-by she went towards her mirror, and looked curiously at her changed face. It awoke in her an innocent pity for herself to see the light gone out of her eyes, the white cheeks, and the sad little mouth. "Poor Love Folyer!" she whispered, and bending forward, kissed her own face in the glass. The movement dislodged a handkerchief that had been lying on the toilette-table, and underneath it Love saw a letter it had covered. She opened it at once.

Reuben—for it was from him—was coming home. They had had great good luck, he said, and by the time the letter reached her he hoped they should be nearing the Town, whence, as soon as they had cast anchor, he should hasten to his darling Love.

Love wept as though her heart would break over this letter. "How good and true he is!" she thought. "And I!—oh, if Reuben only knew!"—and the thought broke her down.

"How wicked I have been," she went on thinking, "when my darling father and mother want me much! I have written them again and again that I could not come just yet; and my father has given me up, and his heart was breaking. They love me so much, and everybody is so true at home. Here I don't know what anybody means, and Reginald is worse than all the rest! Why did I ever come here? I have only grown proud and selfish, and good for nothing! I will go home now. I will! I will start to-morrow."

She arose with sudden energy, opened her window, and looked out to see what weather it was likely to be. The clouds were black, the wind was high, but there was no rain, and Love meant to go. A terror seized her lest she should find her father dead—lest some dreadful thing

should happen before she could get there. How the wind blew ! It was March, she remembered, and the season of the great storms. A new anxiety began to torment her heart for Reuben—almost home, near the coast, it might be, and the wind so high ! “God save Reuben !” broke from her lips.

It was long before the night wore away. She heard the gay guests go ; she heard her aunt’s voice at her door, asking what ailed her and whether she had gone to bed. Love did not answer. She silently put a few of her things together ; and then lay on the bed. Sleepless, restless, listening to those howling blasts, she pictured to herself how black the night must be on the ocean.

The next morning she broke the decision to Mrs. Damer. She was going home ; at once ; she *must* go.

Her aunt surveyed her with unfathomable eyes, and read the firm resolve arightly. “Is it so, Love ?” she sighed. “When will you come back to me ?”

“I don’t know, aunt. Maybe—never.”

“I wonder if Reginald has had to do with this sudden freak ?” thought Mrs. Damer. “Surely she could not have heard what he said last night !”

“I must start this morning, aunt. I am quite ready : the few things I want to take with me are already packed.”

“And can you part with me in this sudden way without a regret, Love ?”

“Not without many, many regrets, dear Aunt Ruth. You will be going again sometime to the Town for the sea-bathing, and then you will come over to see me.”

“She’s mad as a March hare !” rang in Reginald Damer’s angry voice, “and you are mad to indulge her, Aunt Ruth. See what a storm is brewing.”

“I must get there before the storm !” said Love, shivering as though she were in a fit of ague. “This is only the beginning of the storm : and it may not extend to the sea : it may only be a land wind. Aunt ! Reginald ! I *must* go. I only came, you know, on condition that I should go back whensoever I wished.”

Mrs. Damer did not oppose her : she saw how useless it would be. Ordering her carriage, they took her to the train, and thence by the rail to the sea, and placed her safely on board, under the charge of the captain. At the last moment Mrs. Damer folded Love tenderly in her arms, and kissed her pale cheek.

“God bless you, darling !” she said ; “I shall come to see you very soon. All I wanted was to make you happier, but I did not know how !”

The captain’s face was grave. And Love, left alone, soon found that they would not start that day.

“The sea is too high,” he said ; “it would not do to risk it. We

shall see what to-morrow brings us. It may be fairer then : and I shall go if there's a hand's breadth of blue in the sky."

The weather was indeed bad. The sky was almost black with clouds, and the sudden and violent squalls and showers tended to make navigation dangerous.

So that long, weary night Love lay in her narrow berth, feeling how the boat rose and fell on the surging water, even in the sheltered bay, and her homesick longing seemed too much for her to bear, held back as she was by force.

This strange, desperate mania for home that had seized upon her seemed almost unnatural. It seemed to her that unless she went straight home, there and then, she should die. Why it should have arisen she knew not : all she knew or thought of was that home she must go, no matter what the cost.

Oh, if she could only walk on the sea !—or, if it were only miles on miles of land that lay between her and that aged couple whose hold on her heart had grown so suddenly strong ! No storm could have kept her from them then. She wondered if it looked just the same at home as it used to look, with the bright fire, the telescope, and other familiar objects in their places, and her father and mother sitting on either side the hearth. From that her thoughts went off to sea. The boat rocked frightfully, and she wondered whether Reuben's ship was thus rocking on the angry billows, and whether it was almost at home. God save all sailors to-night ! And as she lay there wakeful, Love struck the balance between her two modes of life. She saw how simple, and sweet, and happy, had been those island days, with no deceit in them ; she saw how her gay life, even though her aunt truly loved her, had been false—a striving after excitement, full of aims worldly and unworthy ; and that which had been brightest in it *to her*, was now a memory to blush over. But it has caused her to neglect those dear, waiting ones—had made her letters few and unsatisfactory—had rendered her careless of news from Reuben ; and—" Oh, if I can only get home once more !" sighed poor Love, on her hard pillow.

Next morning no one could have told where the sun was. The storm had not passed over, the wind was still high, and the waves were boisterous, but there was neither rain nor fog. And the captain, with a grave face, told his passengers that he should go at all risks ; but did not advise them to accompany him. Some went on shore at once ; but Love smiled bitterly at his warning, and struggled up on deck, where the wind would have blown her away if she had not clung to the rails, and cowered down, there to watch the homeward progress. It was a long and tedious trip, the violence of the waves baffled them so. In the distance they could see the masts of a vessel rising out of the water, every other part submerged ; that was a dangerous sand-bar, the captain said, and his voice had a gloomy ring in it.

The hours went on, and the boat went on. Thirty miles of ocean lie between the continent and Nantucket Island, but the waters are safer there than outside. At length the voyage was drawing near its end: and Love began to see the long, low outline of her native isle. Yes, they had come in safety.

The ship sailed into the bay off Town, and was moored at her accustomed resting-place. Men came crowding upon her, eager to hear and to tell news of the storm. The bodies of three men had been washed up on the Madaquet shore the night before, they said, and guns of distress had been heard at intervals, though to-day no ships were to be seen.

"Is the 'Star of the Seas' in?" asked the captain—for his brother was the chief officer of that good ship. And that good ship was Reuben's ship, and Love's heart beat as she listened.

"No. It's time she was, though. But she won't come near the shore during this weather. It must be pretty wild over towards Sconsett."

"Wild!" cried another voice amid the townsmen. "You may say that. Old Caldecot came over to-day; and he says the sea is higher at Sconsett than it has been these fifty years past."

"A rough day for old Caldecot to come over. How did he get here?"

"In his light covered waggon. You see he's anxious about the 'Star of the Seas,' and thought he might hear something: his son's on board. He says, too, the bank at Sconsett is undermining, and some of the people have left their cottages in fear of being washed away. That'll tell ye what the storm is."

Love felt faint. *Their* cottage was close to the sea.

"Will some one get a conveyance and take me across the island?" she asked. "I must go at once to Sconsett."

"Better not, Miss Folyer," said the captain. "It is nearly night now. You must stay at the hotel till to-morrow."

Love answered nothing. To Sconsett she would go, though she had to walk it: but she would not provoke more opposition.

She found an escort in old Caldecot, having met him just as he landed. He was about to start for home: and Love gladly got into his light waggon—as it was called—and took her seat beside him. The old man did not say much to her: he was too full of anxiety for Reuben, and in truth for affairs also at Sconsett; and they drove along in silence and very slowly. The sandy road was deep-rutted, but the horse did his best. Now and then Love could see a white milestone gleaming through the night, and her heart throbbed wildly as she thought how every step was bringing her nearer home.

They came in sight of Sconsett at last; a few glimmering lights showed where the village lay, and the loud roar of the surf grew almost deafening. Love never heard the roar so loud before, she

thought, and wondered whether that was because she had been absent so long. It was beginning to rain again, and the wind was strong and cold. Love shivered, and hoped the fire would be bright indoors. They drove down the lane into the village; and then became conscious of some unusual stir.

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Caldecot, nervously, of a boy who was running.

"A ship's been driven aground over by the 'Humane House,' and some of the men have come ashore," was the answer. "It's thought no lives will be lost. That's not the worst," added the lad, hurriedly. "Seth Coffin's house has been swept away, and Starbuck's is going next. The waves reach to the very top of the bank, and it crumbles every minute."

"God help us!" exclaimed Mr. Caldecot. "None other can!"

Starbuck's going next! And whose would be next? Love knew too well. Mr. Starbuck was their nearest neighbour: and how was it that their house had not already gone? Perhaps the water had more force lower down the bank.

In an agony of terror and suspense, Love sprang from the waggon, and ran in the direction of her home. The people were gathered in crowds, some of the women were sobbing and some were screaming: the place was lit up with the strange glare of many lanterns. Love sped shudderingly by the yawning chasm where a house had stood. A loud crash, the mad roar of the waves, and piercing shrieks, told that the next house was going at that moment. Love sped on. She had to make her way through heaps of furniture brought from the perilled houses, and through throngs of people. She saw her own little weather-beaten home at length, and was rushing towards it when she found herself held back.

"What would you do, girl! It is dangerous to go any nearer."

"Where are my father and mother?" she moaned.

The waves roared louder and more hungrily, bits of bank crumbled and slipped away momentarily, and she was not heard.

"Beriah Folyer!" the people shouted. "Make haste! There is not a moment to lose! You are a dead man if you wait longer."

Captain Folyer appeared at the window, his wife on his arm, and stood there calmly. His hair had turned white. A great fear fell on those around: they saw that his senses had deserted him; his mind was wandering.

"Neighbours," he said, "it is God's will. We will not leave our house. We have lived here, and we will die here. We have nothing to live for. God is sending His waves and billows upon us. Do not disturb us!"

"Father! dear father!" shrieked Love.

He looked uncertainly around. "I had a daughter once," he said;

"she forsook me. There is nothing to live for. We will go with our house!" And they disappeared from the window, and shut it.

"He has gone mad," gasped the people. "And his door is bolted! Oh! what will be done?"

The house was trembling. Those who had tried the door came rushing back for dear life. The bank was already ominously shaking. Love, helpless and struggling, was held back by the terrified women.

At that moment a panting, breathless young fellow, in the garb of a sailor, dashed up amid the crowd, went to the door and forced it open. The wind howled, the torches gave an uncertain, whiffing light; and nobody knew more until they saw Captain and Mrs. Folyer amid them, brought out by this courageous young sailor.

"Is it *thee*, Reuben!" cried the delighted father. "How did thee get here?"

"It is our ship that is come ashore, father."

Love had fainted. She woke up to find Reuben's arm around her.

"Reuben?" she whispered.

"Yes, my darling, even so. I told you the storms should not keep me from you: and here I am, and the two years are up. But, Love, I tremble for the present I was to bring from over the seas. Should our good ship go to pieces before morning, the box of cashmeres will go with it."

"Oh, Reuben, what matter the cashmeres now that I have you," she murmured.

But the ship did not go to pieces: the "Star of the Seas" was saved, and the box with it.

And a little rest and Love's dear presence brought Captain Folyer's mind back. He and his wife and Love and Reuben soon moved into a better and larger house, where they would all live together. And there was not a happier or a prouder young dame than Love Caldecot, when she would drive with her husband over to Town, attired in one of the handsome cashmeres.



OVER THE SILVER RHINE.

WE sat beside a window,
 We friends and travellers three,
 Journeying through the old world lands,
 From a country over the sea.
 And the broad fields lay beneath us,
 Hedged with the clustering vine,
 As we glanced from out our window
 Over the silver Rhine.

Along its banks were clustered
 Old towns and hamlets fair;
 And the sound of the chime-bells ringing
 Filled e'er and anon the air.
 And the water danced and sparkled
 Like gems in the summer's shine,
 As we looked from out our window
 Over the brilliant Rhine.

And we saw the swift boats gliding
 On the golden waves below,
 Or anchored, listlessly swaying
 With the river's ebb and flow.
 And we marked afar in the distance
 Its current's shining line,
 As we leaned from out our window
 Over the murm'ring Rhine.

And we talked of the Past and the Future;
 And the blessed hopes that rise,
 In the golden glow of summer,
 To the youthful dreamer's eyes.
 Sweet were our dreams that morning,
 Oh, early friends of mine!
 As we gazed from out our window
 Over the beautiful Rhine.

Now years have rolled between us,
 And that morning's golden glow,
 With its pictures and its music,
 Are the things of long ago.

Over the Silver Rhine.

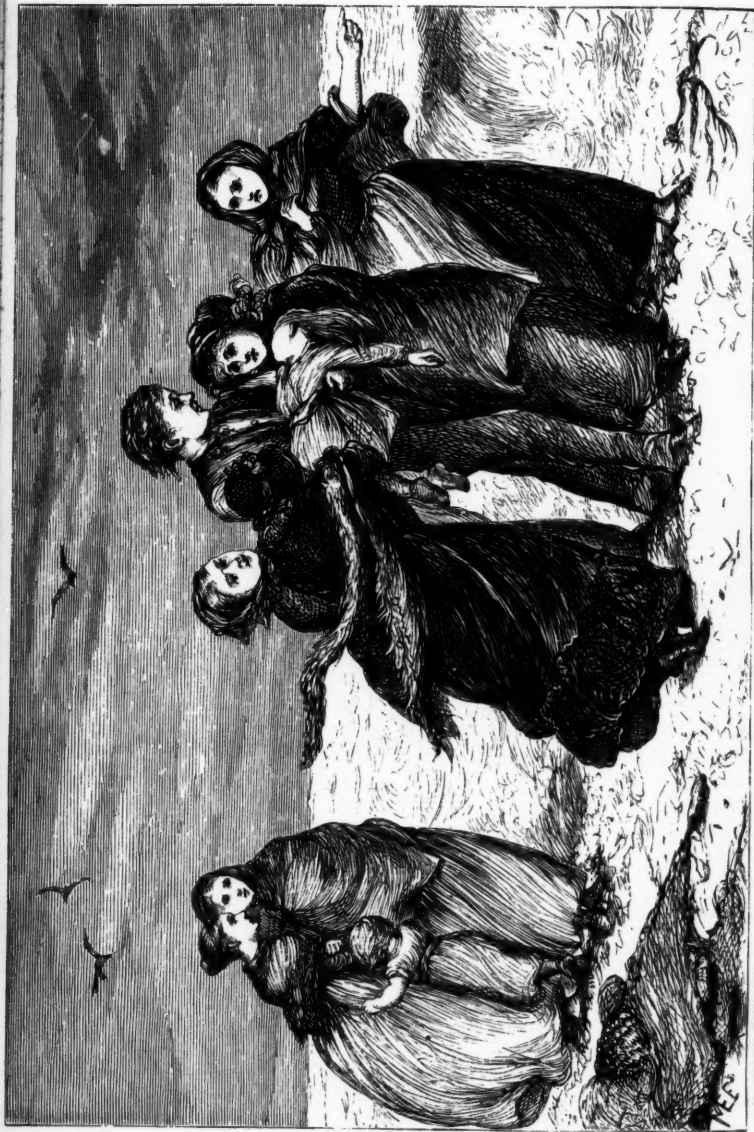
And afar in Memory's vista
Those blessed visions shine,
More fair than the golden ripples
Over the sparkling Rhine.

And still in the gloomy weather
That comes with winter chill,
When the blast is bleak and bitter,
And the snow shrouds vale and hill,
I think of that summer morning :
And its blessed memories shrine,
Like a sacred spot, that window
Over the peaceful Rhine.

We have stood since then by a river
More dark than the ocean tide ;
And two have crossed its waters,
And are safe on the other side.
I have dreamed of the vales they are treading,
Where flowers of amaranth twine,
More sweet than the shining landscape
That is clasped by the flowing Rhine.

And I think when I shall join them,
In that country over the sea,
We shall sit and dream together
Once more, we pilgrims three.
We shall look from heights supernal,
Where Time's broad river rolls,
Sweeping away below us,
With its freight of human souls ;
And our dreams shall then be real,
Lived out in the life divine,
Of a morn more fair than shone ever
Over the silver Rhine.





M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

EDWARD STANS.

"To my house!" cried Mrs. Bent, rushing forward to lead the way.